Commentary

Volume Sixty, Number Five, November 1975

THE NEW AMERICAN NOVEL
Robert Alter

THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE
Joseph R. Levenson

INTELLECTUALS, JAPANESE-STYLE
Edward Seidensticker

MANN IN HIS LETTERS
Arthur A. Cohen

OUT AT SHEA
Edward Grossman

MOVIES: MAN BITES SHARK (& Other Curiosities)
William S. Pechter

Books in Review:
Jack Richardson
Martin Green
David Singer
David Stern
Jeane Kirkpatrick

Israel and the United States: From Dependence to Nuclear Weapons?

Robert W. Tucker

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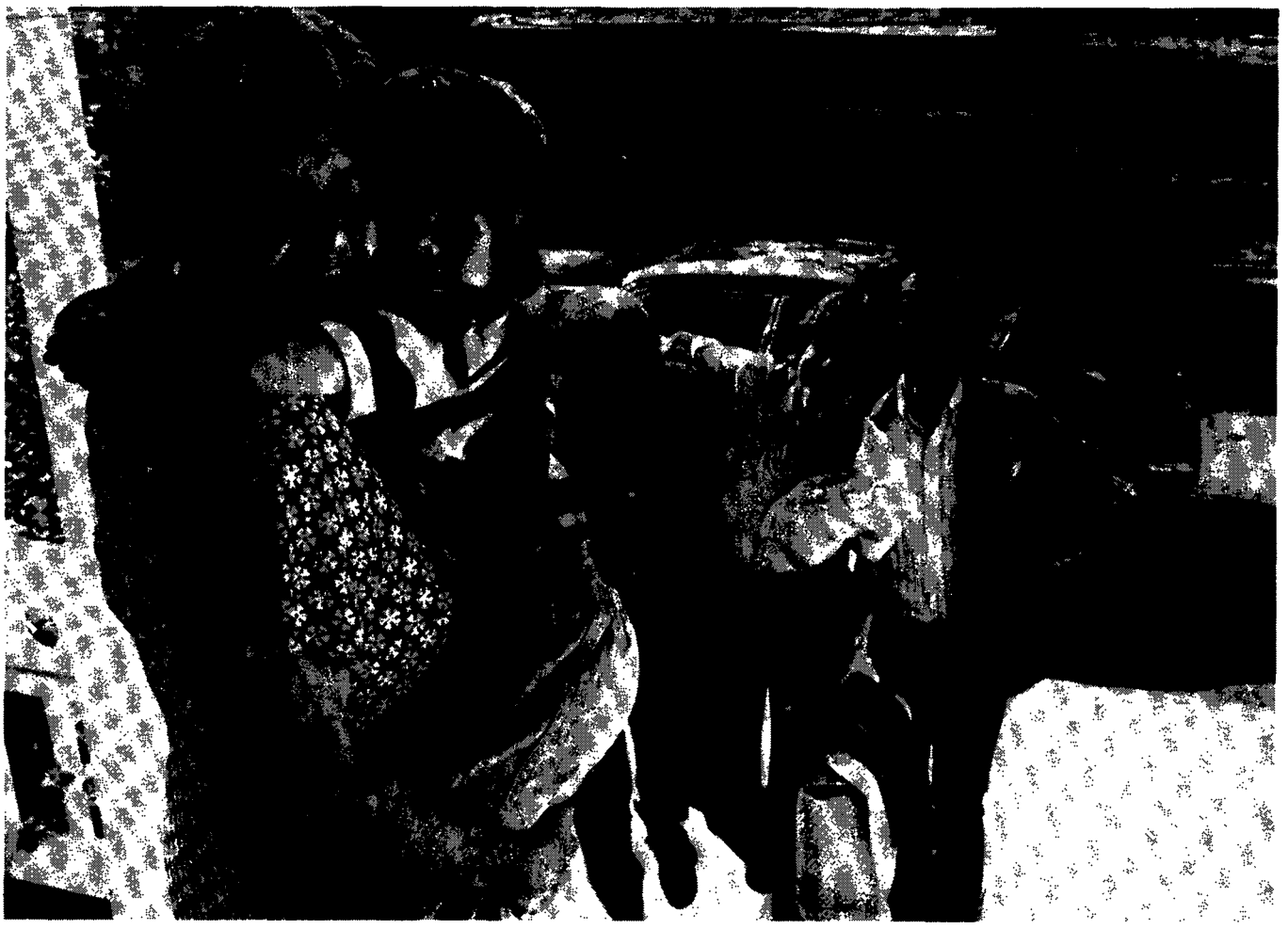

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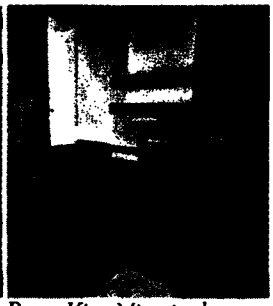

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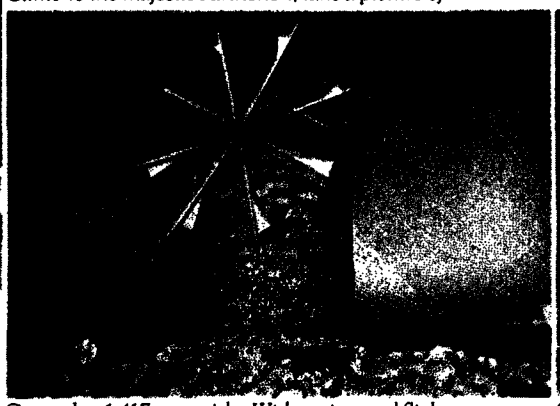

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Letters from Readers

"America Now: A Failure of Nerve?"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to challenge some of the interesting assertions—statements of fact, statements of faith—in the symposium, "America Now: A Failure of Nerve?" [July]. Certain of the contributors are friends of mine—or were friends at one time—and it is not without some feeling of sadness that I note the distance separating their present political views and those I myself now hold. I shall be trying to determine just why such differences have emerged as I take up once again some of the matters discussed in the symposium. And I shall not comment at all on what took place in Southeast Asia after President Nixon resigned his office. No useful purpose is now served in either asserting that the Thieu government was doomed no matter how much aid we gave it, or that the Thieu government could have held out indefinitely, given sufficient aid. Now that the fate of Southeast Asia has been sealed, neither view is demonstrable. So I think that both Herman Kahn on the one hand, and Christopher Lasch on the other, can be said to have chosen to defend positions which are not now even open to attack.

But other and more interesting ideas are expressed by the contributors. For instance, Zbigniew Brzezinski suggests that the United States faces the countries of the Third World—and of the Fourth, too—in a conflict which now goes beyond, or is more important than, our situation of conflict with the USSR. And Mr. Brzezinski adds that the USSR is the beneficiary of our present conflict with the Third and Fourth World countries. Here is a notion that is suggestive, interesting, and would be of major import if it were indeed true. I have some question, though, as to its truth. When Mr. Brzezinski notes a major conflict between the United States and the Third and Fourth World countries, to what precisely is he referring? To American relations with Latin America? With India? With the new nations of Africa? Or with the oil-producing countries along the Persian Gulf? Is he referring to American relations with all of these nations? Or just to some of them? Unfortunately, he has not spelled out exactly whom the United States is facing in a conflict he suggests is now more important than our competitive and at times adversary relationship with the USSR. Mr. Brzezinski knows how to write clearly, and he must have had some reason for leaving this very important matter vague. But suppose we look at his proposition more closely. I submit that the only Third World countries against whom it has even been suggested that the United States might take military action are the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf. And certainly it is the case that military action by the United States—against Saudi Arabia, for instance—while very unlikely at the present time (though by no means a bizarre project, as Irving Howe prefers to think), is far more likely than any military action by the United States against the USSR. So perhaps this is the conflict Mr. Brzezinski is alluding to. Once we have spelled the matter out in this way—of course, Mr. Brzezinski may have had something quite different in mind—it becomes impossible to agree with his view. For I submit that our conflict with the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf only takes on significant meaning because of our conflict with the USSR. As Anthony Eden warned in 1956, the West can be destroyed by the *combined* economic and military power of the Arab oil monopoly and the Russian nuclear force. If it were not for Russian atomic power, I think, we would not have yielded to the price rise of the oil cartel.

I suggest Mr. Brzezinski is repeating an error made by Hans J. Morgenthau in his article, "The New Diplomacy of Movement" (*Encounter*, August 1974). Here Mr. Morgenthau announced a new international factor without "precedent in recorded history": ". . . the divorcement of military power from economic and political power insofar as the latter is derived from the former. . . ." The functional relationship, he wrote, ". . . between political, military, and economic power has been severed by the very dynamics of modern industrial and technological developments. In consequence, a

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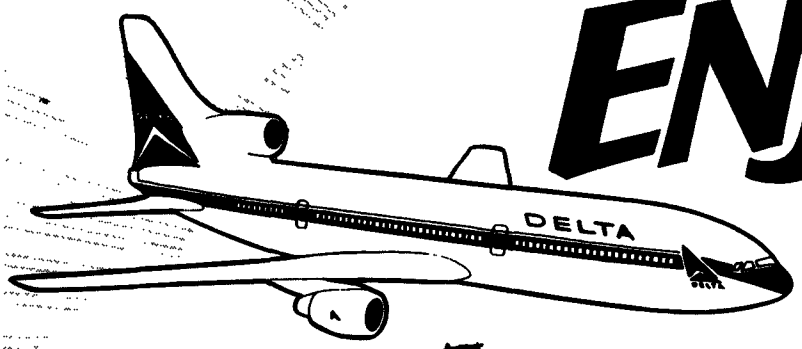

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nation, or group of nations, completely devoid of a modern industrial and technological capacity and military potential, is able to wield political power over nations far superior to them in that capacity and potential. That ability results from the monopolistic or quasi-monopolistic control of raw materials essential to the operation of advanced economies. . . ." The error in this statement of Mr. Morgenthau's is precisely the one that I think led Mr. Brzezinski to assert that our main political conflict now is with the nations of the Third World and the Fourth. What is the error I am pointing at? It consists of thinking that the oil monopoly of the Arab nations, quite apart from the military backing of them by the Soviet Union, has given them political power over industrially advanced and militarily superior nations. I think this is just not true. I think, too, that the Soviet Union is the beneficiary of any assertion that its conflict with us is of less moment and import than our conflict with the Third World (and the Fourth).

I must note here that neither Mr. Brzezinski nor Mr. Morgenthau—nor Stanley Hoffmann, for that matter—has made accusatory or intemperate statements, even when criticizing the Middle Eastern policies of the Secretary of State. After all, these men are political scientists. But others of the contributors have felt free to savage Mr. Kissinger with respect to his policy toward Israel. Here, I think, is a matter on which one does not have to be equivocal. The contributors who attack the Secretary for his policy toward Israel are quite wrong. Why? For the simple reason that no other policy than Secretary Kissinger's was, given the circumstances, even conceivable. No American President, not even Senator Jackson, were he President, could have set as a goal for American policy in the Middle East any state of affairs other than the prevention of another war and a second oil embargo. If by military action we were able to control the Persian Gulf oil, then, I think, we might not have had to require of Israel concessions to its Arab neighbors. But the contributors who attack Henry Kissinger's policy toward Israel are by no means ready to suggest that we take military action in the Persian Gulf. Far from urging any such action, Mr. Howe even criticizes COMMENTARY (mildly) for having published Robert W. Tucker's article which argued for its rationality ["Oil: The Issue of American Intervention," January]. And Harold Rosenberg, who is at least not made irate by the idea, doubts that the United States can act in this manner. He asks, "When has the United States government protected its citizens against cartels? Pepper? Coffee? Sugar?" And Mr. Hoffmann remarks that the present moral atmosphere is not favorable to any such action. I do have to agree with Mr. Hoffmann about this, and at least he has had the grace not to be immoderate in his strictures on Henry Kissinger's policy. For the only real alternative to that policy would have, in fact, to be military action by the United States in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Rosenberg has another idea, though. Which is that we impose no policy on the Israelis and, as Mr. Rosenberg puts it, allow them and ourselves ". . . to develop Negative Capability, the talent for remaining indefinitely in uncertainty and doubt, 'without any irritable reaching' for answers." So his program in the Middle East dilemma is for Israel, and the United States, also, to become a little like Shakespeare, or a little like Shakespeare as John Keats saw him. This would be fine by me, for I would have no objection to seeing an Israel, and a United States for that matter, with some of Shakespeare's capabilities—even with certain of Mr. Rosenberg's. But if this is to be a program and not just words, would not the Arabs also have to develop Negative Capabilities, and overcome their regular tendency to reach out irritably—and militarily—for answers? In the present circumstance there is no doubt whatever that the policy now being achieved is the only one with a chance of preventing an immediate military clash. And is it a good thing, after all, to think one is like Shakespeare whenever—and because—one has nothing to recommend?

My differences with men I've often agreed with in the past on such matters as the Middle Eastern policy of our government, and also on the standing of the United States among the nations of the world at this time, suggest a need to reflect on the difficulties of American policy and the peculiarities of this country's position. Mr. Howe notes that ". . . our elites have begun to question the legitimacy of American civilization. . . . Increasingly, the positive achievements of U.S. foreign policy have come to seem exceptions to a bleak and rigid system of support for rotten and rotting authoritarian regimes. . . ." Now this is a new note from Mr. Howe. But the point I want to emphasize here is not that Mr. Howe has changed his view. What I want to ask is whether his present view is justified. Has American policy been as bad in fact as he now seems to think it was? And why has the record been so bad? Do Americans suffer from some inability to think politically? Or is there some inherent difficulty in the conduct of American foreign policy which has made it unmanageable? I am inclined to this second view, for I do not think that our government is or has to be fundamentally reactionary, and I do not think that our leaders are or have to be fundamentally misguided in their judgment of political events. Perhaps our leaders are and have to be as foolish as many astute observers think them. But for my part I will make this judgment only if I have to. And I do not have to make it if I can find some other—and better—explanation for the difficulties we find ourselves in today. And when I reflect on our policies and on the nature of our country I find that there *is* an inherent difficulty in conducting American foreign policy which the contributors to the symposium have not even considered. The difficulty is this: the ideology of this country is fundamentally progressive, and has become almost violently so in recent years. But the physical situation of this country, its natural wealth, resources, and past history require it to be a conservative power in relation to other countries. A country with a population imbued with progressive ideas, which is, and has to be, conservative in view of the wealth it holds and cannot but defend, is a country whose course it is very difficult to plot, and a country very difficult to rule.

But one of my premises may be challenged. It might well be argued: why does the United States *have to be* conservative internationally? Why can it not be as progressive on the international scene as the ideology of its citizens requires it to be in its domestic affairs? What if the United States were a socialist state on the Scandinavian model?

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Would it still have to be a conservative power on the international scene? I think it enough simply to pose this question to realize something about our situation which may surprise our leftists and progressives. The United States, even were it to have a socialist or a nationalized economy, would still have to be a conservative power. Why? The answer should be clear. We consume some 30 per cent of the world's energy while occupying only one-sixth or even less of its land mass. If socialism is not going to mean a lower standard of living for the average American, then even under socialism we would have to protect our advantages, and it is in the planned protection of our advantages that the United States appears as a conservative power. One example: our relations with the Soviet Union would be far more difficult if our government had a socialist base. For then we would be more dangerous to the Soviets, and Soviet power would be more threatening to us. So the costs of our defense would go up instead of down. And in any circumstances, this nation would be difficult to rule, for the feelings of the people, who are naturally progressive in their outlook, are constantly being violated by the measures taken for their—which is to say our—security. And we cannot give up our wealth. We have taken a vow of riches, and can hardly go back on it without becoming demoralized.

Our system does work well under special circumstances, when, as in the war against Hitler and Japan, the military steps President Roosevelt took to guard our security were applauded by progressives. This was no longer the case in the Korean war, and in the Vietnam affair President Johnson's efforts to emulate Roosevelt were ludicrously inept. No doubt he thought that by leading a civil-rights movement he could ride herd on our progressives, at least long enough for General Westmoreland to ride herd on the Vietcong. As we know, his policies failed. But faultily conceived as they were, I must still insist that the problem they were framed to meet was a most difficult one. More recently we saw another President driven from office. His difficulty—I use the word advisedly, for I do not want to speak here of crimes—was that he thought he could represent just the conservative needs of this nation in its international relations and totally disregard the progressive impulses of the people who had elected him. In a democratic country such as ours, this is an impossible course, and Nixon had to pay for his obstinacy with the abject surrender of his office. But I am not interested as some of the contributors are in calling names. If the Nixon people committed crimes, so did the Kennedyites and the Johnsonites, and the real question is why. My answer is that American policy is extremely difficult. It has to satisfy contradictory aims, for our problem is to remain rich, secure, and progressive, too. If Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon did not know how to achieve all that, neither do the contributors who have criticized them in the symposium.

LIONEL ABEL
Buffalo, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found the symposium intellectually invigorating. . . . Many contributors emphasize America's failure to understand world affairs and the lack of a clear notion of our purposes as a nation. Edmund Stillman's remark that American foreign policy was in his opinion "brilliantly conceived in the earliest days of containment" reminds me of what I believe is still the most intelligent and prudential formulation of American purpose available to us. I discovered it in Dean Acheson's memoir, *Present at the Creation*. Acheson said of America's postwar policy that:

> Its central aim and purpose was to safeguard the highest interest of our nation, which was to maintain as spacious an environment as possible in which free states might exist and flourish. Its method was common action with like-minded states to secure and enrich the environment and to protect one another from predators through mutual aid and joint effort.

That the past tense of this statement is so noticeable seems to me to be suggestive of our current self-doubt. We no longer are clear about our central aim and purpose, free states are few and failing, common action has ceased to be our method, with mutual aid and joint efforts stymied by the variety of predators and the di-

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verse tensions of the international environment.

Nevertheless, is the uniform pessimism revealed by the contributors justified? I wonder. For all its intelligence, the COMMENTARY symposium seems strangely out of touch with the energies and concerns of common citizenship. These energies and interests have not been defeated; they have been patient and long-suffering. The intellectuals may be tired and confused, even frightened, but are the people? Considerably more than thirty-five citizens will have a hand in answering that question.

WILLIAM E. JOHNSTON, JR.
Claremont, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The contributors to the symposium can be grouped by ideological bent, all except one, . . . whom I will discuss last.

The first group I shall call the Eleanor Roosevelt Brigade: vapid, fuzzy, befuddled do-gooders whom history has taught nothing. The success of their policies will guarantee us a prominent place in the Gulag Archipelago. In this group we have Josiah Lee Auspitz, Norman Birnbaum, James Chace, Richard A. Falk, Townsend Hoopes, Penn Kemble, Kermit Lansner, Christopher Lasch, William Phillips, Harold Rosenberg, Ronald Steel, Edmund Stillman, and, regrettably, Diana Trilling.

The second group specializes in saying nothing, but saying it verbosely in sociologese. When translated into English their ideas resemble those of the first group, but the fog is thick and a true translation is not always possible. These include Zbigniew Brzezinski, Rita E. Hauser, Stanley Hoffmann, Zygmunt Nagorski, Jr., and Fritz Stern.

In a third group are a few people with major points to make, good or bad, but at least of some importance: Edward Jay Epstein, Charles Frankel, Herman Kahn, Michael Novak, and Robert W. Tucker.

In the fourth group, all too small, we have America's best minds, sharp, able, not deluded, at times profound. Most of them are liberals, as I am not, but their thinking is clear and their advice is sensible. God bless them. They are William Barrett, Irving Kristol, Sidney Hook, Midge Decter, Robert Nisbet, Peter L. Berger, Seymour Martin Lipset, Edward N. Luttwak, Hans J. Morgenthau, Eugene V. Rostow, and Paul Seabury. The first five in particular would do honor to any country, any culture.

Lastly, in a . . . class by himself, comes Irving Howe. This leading light of socialist and progressive thought would at first seem to be merely another candidate for the Eleanor Roosevelt Brigade. But a careful reading of his contribution shows him to be an . . . enemy of anyone who has actually done battle against the Communist totalitarians, an *echt*-anti-anti-Communist. Thus today's liberals like Daniel P. Moynihan and Norman Podhoretz, are already suspect to him. And when it comes to the recent past, the real villains of history are "the Lovestone-social-democrat officialdom," the dimwits of the CIA, and again "the blunderers working for Jay Lovestone."

Now the Lovestone group officially dissolved on January 25, 1941, over thirty-four years ago. But it so happens that the only victory which democracy has won in its battle with Communist total-

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itarianism in this century was the defeat of the Bolshevik attempt to take over Western Europe in 1945 and 1946. This defeat was largely engineered by the American Federation of Labor, working through two of its most devoted servants, Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown. . . .

Actually, it is difficult to decide just what makes a man like Mr. Howe, with some decent instincts and valid pretensions to scholarship, certainly no Communist sympathizer himself, so hate democracy's warriors. . . . In the long run, I suppose, it is just the traditional factionalism of the American Left in which, even if one no longer says *"pas d'ennemis à gauche,"* one can at least say *"pas des amis à droit."* . . .

JOSEPH DAVIS

Fishkill, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The introduction to the symposium notes that there is "an increasing disposition among the elites—political, cultural, and even commercial—to question the legitimacy of American civilization." Where such elites once stressed "the virtues of an industrialized liberal democracy" the emphasis is now given to its failings, and even to "the most hostile descriptions of the country's character." . . .

Of the thirty-five contributors only one, Hans J. Morgenthau, recognizes, implicitly, the problem in this approach—that is, in an industrialized liberal democracy, what do the *people* think? Mr. Morgenthau points out that "large masses of the American electorate have lost faith in their ability to influence the decisions of the government through their use of the democratic processes." He attributes this apathy to the exclusion of the people from the governing process and predicts that if this exclusion continues the result will be non-democratic rule "either by a virtually permanent bureaucracy or by a presidential authoritarianism."

Another contributor, Charles Frankel, also recognizes that

> The democratic morality practiced by most Americans—though not always articulated by them—is at odds with the intellectuals' accredited moral posture. So long as the disparity is what it is, the intellectual voice of our society will be instructing Americans in chronic bad conscience, no matter what.

But most Americans do not articulate democratic morality simply because they are never asked to do so. The COMMENTARY symposium simply adds to, and reflects, this disparity. . . .

Rita E. Hauser notes:

> The average American believes he will prosper, perhaps he believes that more than most intellectuals, and, I think, he has accepted with less difficulty than they the fact that America's power has declined these past fifteen years. If the polls are right, he understands that the world is too diverse for us to dominate, too chaotic for us to control, yet too fearsome to abandon altogether.

She thereupon provides her solution. The intellectual and political elites "would better serve the nation by trying to redefine and articulate our basic foreign-policy premises."

What Mrs. Hauser has given us here is a statement defending oligarchy, not democracy. The logical answer to her question is that freedom for the people is diminished when the task of formulating new policy is taken up by the elites. . . .

The issue that should have been discussed devolves not on the failings of our democracy but, rather, on the existence of one. But the contributors to the symposium apparently have other fish to fry. They use the questions asked of them by COMMENTARY to fight against their favorite hobgoblins: Nixon, Kissinger, U.S.-Soviet relations, . . . the U.S. role in Vietnam, the press, intellectual chic. Only Mr. Morgenthau and, to a lesser extent, Mr. Frankel suggest that perhaps the American people, too, ought to be brought into the discussion. . . .

One wonders—even fears—what the result would be in this country if the people were to rouse themselves from apathy and determine that the fitting way to commemorate our bicentennial would be to put life and meaning into our political system and convert the myth of democracy into the reality of democracy. . . .

D. R. ZUKERMAN

Lonely Pamphleteer Review

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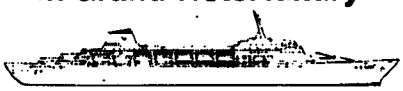

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In my view, America's failure of nerve, or perhaps we might say simply the deterioration of our country, became quite apparent by the fall of 1961 and thereafter worsened. This deterioration was well advanced by the time the Vietnam war went into high gear. Thus the Vietnam war, I would say, did not produce the deterioration but instead, the deterioration helped to cause the loss of the war. This it did, in my view, indirectly through tempting and encouraging the administration to try to win a political victory without first winning a military victory. . . .

My main point is that we should know and should remember that we did not have to lose the war in Vietnam. May I also note that the United States not too long ago provided the bulk of the military forces involved in winning a world war fought simultaneously in both hemispheres. It is not realistic to believe that a nation that did this could not overcome a small Asian nation.

Yet only one contributor—Irving Kristol—seems to know why we lost the war. To quote Mr. Kristol: "Wrong were all those who had ingenious computerized strategies derived from 'game theory' which encouraged us to believe that a graduated escalation of hostilities would, at some point, achieve a disequilibrium of costs and benefits to the enemy that would cause him to accept a cease-fire."

We all hope that we will never have another war, but still we may, and so let us all realize that we must never again fight a war that we do not try to win. . . .

FRANCIS P. HARDAWAY
Saint Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The developments of the last few years have demonstrated that the deployment of over half-a-million troops for a number of years, and the expenditure of about $150 billion were inadequate to assure the success of the American purpose, whatever that might have been. . . . The legacy of the Vietnam misadventure is the complete and utter erosion of confidence in our military and political experts, a conclusion which on the face of it was self-evident to the entire non-American world long before 1975, or for that matter 1968.

In short, it is hardly proper to

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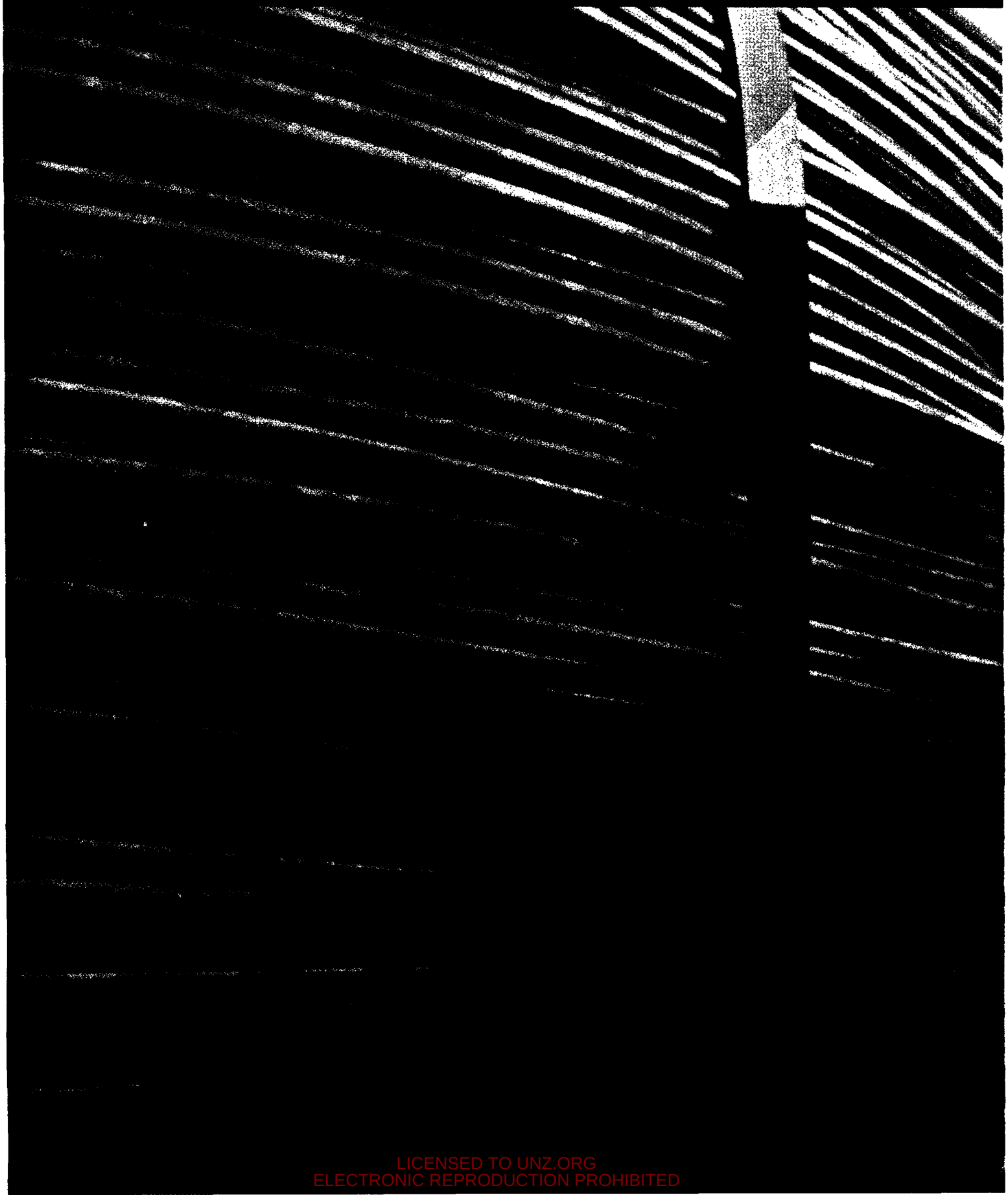

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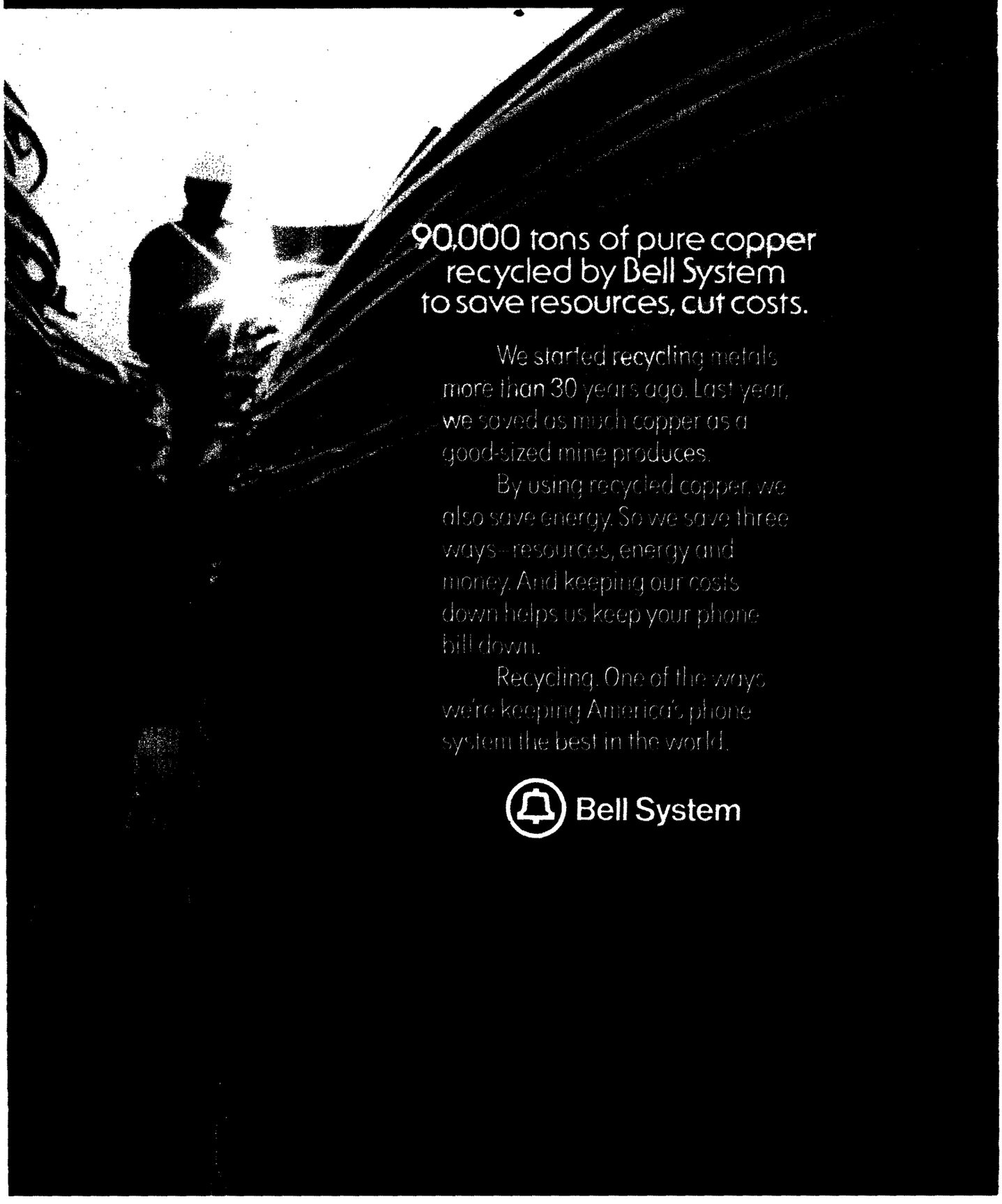

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talk either of a failure of nerve or of a new sense of maturity. What we are facing is the total failure of our decision-making process, a failure on which the rest of the world is now acting, and which raises the most serious questions about the underlying merits of any policy developed by the old "team" and the old methods.

A. JOSEPH BERLAU
Hartsdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thirty-five COMMENTARY writers contradicting and cancelling out one another's wisdom! To paraphrase what Shaw said of his fellow Irishmen: "Put a COMMENTARY writer on a spit, and you can always get another COMMENTARY writer to turn it." . . .

Perhaps Irving Howe comes closest to my own position when he writes: "U.S. policy is deeply disliked and distrusted throughout the world for many reasons, and some of them are bad ones; but surely one reason is the evident chasm between its proclaimed values and its actual practice, its evident lack of serious concern for 'the survival and the success of liberty.'" . . .

About half the contributors to the symposium are the American equivalents of Franz von Papen. Papen was a Catholic conservative who hated socialism and Communism so much that he greased the way for Hitler. . . . I am sympathetic to von Papen's conservatism and anti-Communism, but his support of Hitler had the result of half of Europe's becoming Communist. . . .

Since we are not as beset as Germany was . . . with defeats, inflation, powerful internal and external enemies, we will not suffer the same fate as the German people. But Vietnam hurled us in that direction. Let us not forget the writers in this symposium who supported that fight which aided Communism beyond its dreams. . . .

JAMES C. WHITE
Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"America Now: A Failure of Nerve?" overlooks one important fact: though Americans have taken pride in belonging to the largest industrial nation, the most advanced agricultural power, the wealthiest land, and the freest country in the world, they have never wanted to be the world's foremost political or military power. In spite of the strong possibility of a Hitler victory in Europe, Americans would have gladly sat out World War II had not Pearl Harbor forced them to intervene. As a by-product of World War II, the United States was catapulted, very reluctantly, into a position of world leadership. . . .

America's sudden strength imposed upon its leaders the role of defenders of the free world. Yet when John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural speech that this country would "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship . . . to assure the survival and the success of liberty," he spoke only for Camelot. In Vietnam the unanswerable question of every American soldier was: "What the hell am I doing here?" The soldier of an imperialist nation would not have asked this question. . . .

Thus it can be argued that there has been no sudden "failure of nerve." Until recently the American could afford . . . "the best things in life" (which are not always free). He was never cut out to fight for supremacy against nations whose people lived in the Spartan poverty which accompanies totalitarian ideologies. Patriotism can be the poor man's substitute for the amenities of life. In affluent America, however, patriotism was degraded in the 60's and became a synonym for softheadedness. The singlemindedness with which Communist totalitarianism pursues its goals is just not part of the American fabric. . . .

Just as it is a myth that freedom makes better soldiers than oppression (witness the fighting ability of German and Russian soldiers during World War II), freedom of the press, speech, and expression, puts a democracy—in times of collision—at a disadvantage in a fight with a hermetic, secretive, and censor-ridden totalitarian regime. . . . You can't expose all your weaknesses to the whole world, and expect the world to believe in your undiminished strength. Freedom has its price. And the United States is paying. . . .

Détente and similar tranquilizers have made this country forget that the Communists are totally serious about creating a Communist world. If democracy . . . is to survive, this fact must be recognized. . . .

BENNO WEISER VARON
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I commend COMMENTARY for its concern with our heritage and for our future. . . . Nevertheless, I wonder why you did not also include the views of religious thinkers. . . . Does not the matter of failure of nerve have religious implications?

The negation of the religious aspects of social-political issues seems to characterize our contemporary secularist or non-religious writers. Yet the founders of our Republic were not only perceptive men of action; they were also imbued with religious concepts and values. . . .

Our great prophets faced world-shaking crises not with opinion polls but with trust in cosmic, moral laws and with calls to social justice and morality and to facing the future with faith. We must also seek to right our social and moral wrongs and face the future with confidence. . . .

[Rabbi] NATHAN A. BARACK
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I think it is understandable, though regrettable, that a member of the military establishment was not represented in the symposium: understandable because professional soldiers ought to stand conspicuously aloof from politics, yet regrettable because we in the armed forces spend a lot of time and . . . effort trying to understand the ways in which our nation and the world are evolving in order to prepare ourselves accordingly. . . .

All in all, however, I am gratified that so many serious thinkers are asking the same question as I am: how should a powerful nation which thinks its survival is important . . . behave? . . .

[Major] CHARLES A. KROHN
U.S. Army
Hampton, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"America Now: A Failure of Nerve?" was most timely and interesting. I myself have no doubt that as a nation we are now more passive in international relations (as well as other areas) than at any other time since World War II. . . . I think there are five reasons for our present passivity.

1) Confrontations, to which activity sometimes but does not necessarily lead, are anxiety-producing (whether based on reality or not). Most people in their personal lives

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try very hard to avoid anxiety. . . . Only experience teaches (although there is no guarantee the teaching will last) that continued avoidance based on rationalization leads finally to destruction or greater confrontation. . . . A generation which does not know Manchuria, Ethiopia, or Munich is with us now, and, along with some of the older generation whose learning seems not to have endured, is having . . . considerable effect on our foreign policy. Like other generations, this new generation does not want anxiety, but it does not yet know the full price of unreasonable efforts to avoid it.

2) Our leadership, in my judgment, is inferior to what it was before. Secretary Kissinger, who has been running things, is supposed to be shrewd, highly knowledgeable about power, and to possess a scholar's view of history, enabling him to have a long-range view of our interests. But evidence of such supposed qualities is not apparent. During Kissinger's six years, we have lost power (relatively) to the Soviet Union to whom, in addition, we have given economic benefits with no visible *quid pro quo;* we have unnecessarily alienated allies, e.g., Japan; we have engaged in hypocrisy, e.g., surrendering South Vietnam but calling it a negotiated peace with honor, so that our credibility among friends and adversaries has been decreased. . . .

3) In general, we have been living in a passive atmosphere. Unrealistic demands by formerly oppressed minorities have not, in large measure, been challenged; they have been acceded to. . . . It is not to be expected that a nation which acts passively at home will find itself able to do better abroad. Especially when it lacks good leadership.

4) Our nation has not been properly educated (another fault of the leadership) as to the goals of our foreign policy. As Eugene V. Rostow points out, that goal is the rule of law, i.e., implementation of the UN Charter, which says that taking over other people's countries by force is illegal. Whether or not one agrees with our policy in Vietnam, we were not there to protect the South Vietnamese government; nor were we there to defend against Communism. We were there, rather, to defend the principle of no takeover by force. In domestic life, we realize that to live civilly we have to defend the general application of the rule of law. . . . Why is it so hard to gain a similar comprehension about international matters? . . .

5) Finally, I believe, our greater passivity is due to a good factor, namely, our movement toward maturity, the effects of which, however, have gone too far. Our growing maturity, coupled with objective changes since World War II, has acquainted us with the finiteness of our power. We have properly given up our fantasy of near omnipotence. Obviously, we have to acquire the proper balance, a difficult thing to do collectively. . . .

In conclusion, though, I would like to state my own belief, notwithstanding pessimistic factors, that the relative sense and decency of our people is such that we will find the proper balance.

LEONARD S. SANDWEISS
New York City

Socialist Myth

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Any author would be pleased to receive a review as judicious and fair as Jeane Kirkpatrick gave my book, *Pyramids of Sacrifice* [Books in Review, August], and quibbling with details could be considered graceless. I'm pleased, indeed, and I don't want to quibble, but there is one particular detail on which Mrs. Kirkpatrick has misunderstood me, and it is important enough to correct the misunderstanding: I argued in the book that the appeal of revolutionary socialism lies, at least in part, in its promise of the sort of human community disrupted by the processes of modernization. Mrs. Kirkpatrick criticizes this argument by pointing out that there is no evidence that members of socialist societies enjoy a greater sense of community than people living under capitalism. True. But I did not argue that they do. The "mythic" appeal of socialism is enormously powerful throughout the world—*except in socialist societies.* This is not just a piquant paradox, but it points to the most profound "contradiction" of socialism—namely, its apparent inability to keep its promise of liberating community. Put differently: those who have fallen under the sway of the socialist myth (and I have no quarrel with Mrs. Kirkpatrick's observations on the particular susceptibility of Western intellectuals) often appear impervious to just

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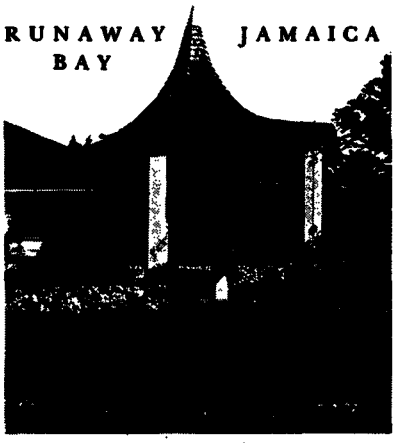

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about any empirical disconfirmation of their political dream. In looking at socialist societies from the vantage point of Western "alienation," no illusion seems to be too grotesque, no justification too tortuous. Apparently there is only one fairly certain cure for this particular will to believe. It occurs, often very rapidly, when the believer finds himself living in a society that has undergone a socialist revolution. But then, of course, it is too late for the reassessment to have any political consequences.

PETER L. BERGER
Brooklyn, New York

JEANE KIRKPATRICK writes:

Peter L. Berger thinks that I misunderstood his position concerning the "mythic" appeals of socialism. I think that he has misunderstood my criticism. In *Pyramids of Sacrifice* Mr. Berger argues that an important part of the appeal of revolutionary socialism lies in its "promise of liberating community." I agree with him that the validity of this argument does not depend on whether socialist societies in fact provide such community. But I not only doubt that revolutionary socialist regimes deliver on the promise to restore the human community disrupted by modernization. I question whether "alienation" (the split between the self and society) is a specifically modern phenomenon created by industrialization and urbanization, whether it is more widespread in modern urban settings than elsewhere, and whether the principal appeals of revolutionary socialism lie in its promise of the restoration of community. Careful examination of persons attracted to revolutionary socialism suggests that they may be seeking something other than integration, harmony, and purpose.

In *Mein Kampf* Adolf Hitler wrote with feeling of the devastating impact of industrialization and urbanization on uprooted working-class families. There is little doubt that he sought the restoration of a romanticized German community. But we all understand that the appeals of power, destruction, violence, terror, nihilism were important to Hitler himself, to his lieutenants and followers.

In thinking about the appeals of revolutionary socialism it is important to begin from the fact that revolution means destruction, and the fact that revolutionaries are moved by intense hostility toward the people who embody the society and culture marked for destruction. There is entirely too much romanticizing of the appeals of revolution. I fear that Mr. Berger's argument concerning the mythic appeals of socialism as "liberating community" falls into this error. But I should not like disagreement on this point to obscure my high regard for *Pyramids of Sacrifice*.

A Question of Civility

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My response to Robert Alter's . . . "Manners and the Jewish Intellectual" [August] is a mixture of agreement and disappointment with his treatment of John Murray Cuddihy's . . . *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity*. . . . Cuddihy defines "civility" as the Christian or Protestant aesthetic, the "fierce Puritanism of high good taste," which he contrasts with the vulgarity, exhibitionism, ostentation, materialism, and insensitivity to the canons of social behavior . . . exhibited by the *Ostjude*, the East European or *shtetl* Jew.

Using Anselm's razor with adroit, superficial strokes, Cuddihy cuts away the structural top layers of the three contemporary Jewish "prophets" in the title of his work to expose their brilliant, inventive systems as a disguised apology for the Jewish failure to assimilate to . . . Western civility. . . .

I do not quarrel with Mr. Alter's recognition of Cuddihy's "weird inventiveness," which "ultimately questions the intrinsic validity of any system of thought conceived by a Jew in the past century and a half." But I fault his failure to nail a major flaw in the work. . . .

For the paradigmatic event which really shatters Cuddihy's thesis we must turn to the years between 1939 and 1945. Provided with German warrants for murder, the European nations "solved" their "*Judenfrage*." Was this done in protest against coarse, *shtetl* incivility? Had Europe exhausted its patience with the defilers of Emily Post? In that case, then to the long list of Gentile grievances—deicide, defilement of the Host, poisoning of the wells, ritual blood murder, usury, finance capitalism, labor radicalism, disproportionate representation in medicine, academia, communications, the arts—we now add bad manners. What sense does it make to talk about European civility being threatened by *shtetl* vulgarity when the European representatives of alleged Protestant aestheticism literally bathed in Jewish gore? And when hardly a bell pealed in protest from the stately cathedrals? Cuddihy's gloss of the most shattering trauma of our time with a preposterous, insignificant thesis, only lends further support to the proposition that anti-Semitism has nothing to do with what Jews do, or don't do. . . .

LEO BLOND
Bayside, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter writes about my book as if it were written with ideas, and stale ones at that, rather than with words. Reader, dear prospective reader of my book, now that I, the author, have your attention, let me warn you: Do not be put off; do not impute to my book the worried, kindly tedium of Mr. Alter's labored piece.

The article fails to note that my book happens to be intellectually exciting because something actually *happens* in its pages, and something will happen to you when you read it. It will (I make a prediction) excite, instruct, and involve you; it will please you and make you indignate, just as it did Mr. Alter. But, as for Mr. Alter, he was not about to allow himself to write about all *that*. Instead, he holed up in his carrel, where he huffed and puffed and huffed some more. The article was his last longest huff. "Cuddihy's marvelous book," writes Professor Weisberg, falling down in adoration, in the Summer '75 "Saul Bellow" issue of *Salmagundi*. My book: a "reduction," as Mr. Alter claims? No, it is a translation, like all cultural criticism. I couldn't have brought it off without—Weisberg once more—"a sense of language beyond the pale of sociological jargon."

One thing more: thanks to Mr. Alter for the info on Joyce. I hadn't known that thing about Joyce and the "art-novel." Kevin Sullivan's *Joyce Among the Jesuits* had convinced me that he was only Irish and a climber. Now I know better. It's never too late to learn.

JOHN MURRAY CUDDIHY
Hunter College
New York City

ROBERT ALTER writes:

I appreciate the moral indigna-

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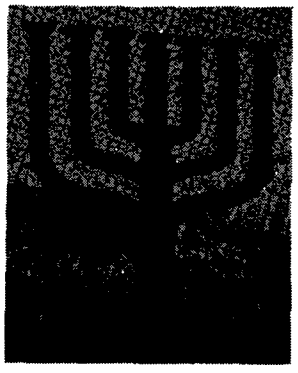

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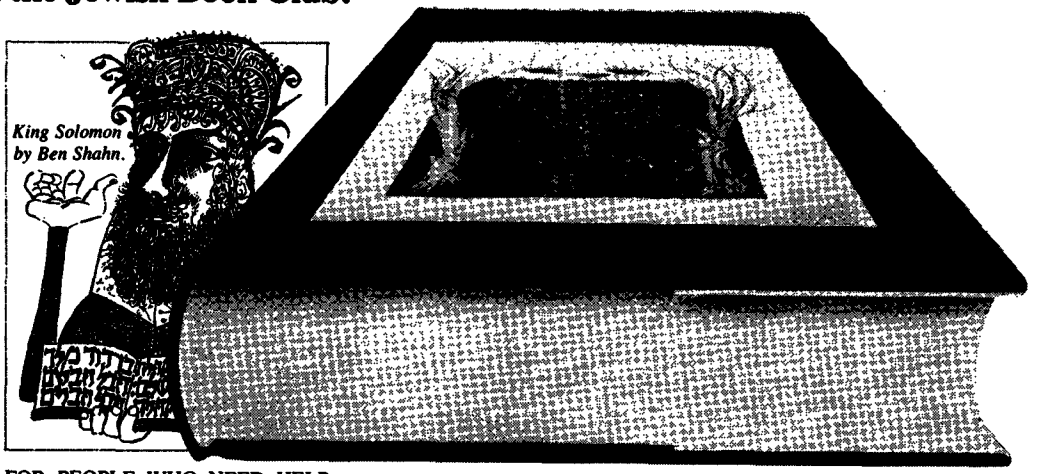

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A general in the Chinese Army who is known to history as "Two Gun Cohen" (page 127). *People you may not think of as Jewish:* Houdini (page 272). Lorne Greene (page 226). Erich von Stroheim (page 575). Victor Borge (page 99).

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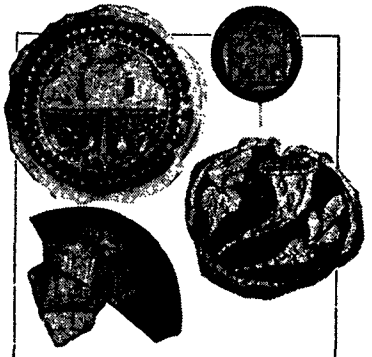

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tion of Leo Blond's letter and the perspective on Mr. Cuddihy's argument he offers by stressing the Holocaust.

The oddness of John Murray Cuddihy's response to my critique is instructive. As an author he is surely entitled to think my views wrong-headed, but he must grant that my article raised a series of substantive questions about his notions of historical causation, about the accuracy of his account of Jewish social history, about his interpretation of specific aspects of Freudian theory. Instead of engaging any of these issues, Mr. Cuddihy chooses to write an embarrassingly self-adulatory blurb for his own book, promising the prospective reader what the reading experience will do for him, even quoting a favorable reviewer. I am further perplexed as to what Mr. Cuddihy could mean by claiming that I discussed his book as though it were written with ideas, not words. He surely cannot be claiming any great accomplishment as a stylist. I was mercifully silent on this aspect of his book in my article, though I did attend closely enough to his use of words to note (in a sentence of his on Joyce and Freud) how a characteristic confusion in syntax reflected a confusion in thought.

The Third World—Cont'd

To the Editor of Commentary:

Daniel P. Moynihan's short response to P. T. Bauer's letter [Letters from Readers, August] asks for additional comment on Mr. Bauer's views as compared with his own as set forth in his article, "The United States in Opposition" [March]. Both Mr. Moynihan and Mr. Bauer (here and in his earlier published works) deserve our gratitude for sweeping away the myths and distortions which prevent most Western intellectuals from perceiving the Third World for what it is. Mr. Bauer, however, goes much further than does Mr. Moynihan, who believes that the problem of Third World attitudes toward the West lies in a neo-Fabian ideology, but that the objectives and aspirations of Third World leaders are still so close to those of the West that diaolgue with the West can lead them slowly into the ways of righteousness. Mr. Bauer emphasizes the vastness of the gap between Third World elites and the West, a gap which is not narrowed by simplified perceptions tempting intellectual adventurers from both sides to believe that they understand one another. Mr. Bauer's picture of Third World ideology as one of totalitarian aspirations molding traditional authoritarianism but limited by scarcity of the techniques and resources which must be mobilized to construct and maintain an effective totalitarianism seems closer to the realities. And Mr. Bauer holds out no hope for a reconciliation with the West in our time. Mr. Bauer's picture seems to have much more predictive value than does Mr. Moynihan's when we check it against the history of the Third World. . . .

One of the first results of contact with the "modern West" for Africa, Asia, and even Latin America (as contact with Iberia was for the Aztec and Inca cultures, as contact with Rome was for Celtic cultures, and so forth) was the destruction of the traditions which channelized and restrained the struggle among competing elites for power, status, and privilege for themselves and their descendants. Another result was the novel availability to various competing elites of new tools for obtaining power—principally techniques of mass mobilization and of police power. . . . Competition among would-be elites insures that a principal task of dominant and challenging elites must be the cold-blooded adaptation and application of these tools. Individuals may of course convince themselves, and will probably convince others, that they are acting for moral-ideological reasons; but there is no reason why Western observers should take these pretensions and self-deceptions seriously.

The utilization of modern police and social-control techniques by Third World elites is nowadays so naked and harsh that no elaboration is required here; Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter has just provided a useful example. The thing to understand and remember—which goes so against the grain for the average Western intellectual—is that genuine examples of civil liberties, majority rule, and the peaceful passing of power from one elite to another are bound to become progressively rarer in the Third World.

The principal means of social mobilization available to would-be rulers in the political-social wasteland of the Third World is the one used so successfully in the West: fanatic integral nationalism carried to the point of religious passion, with the message-bearing elite as high priests and prophets. All the characteristics of Third World nationalism were visible in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries in the Balkans, and for the same reasons. This nationalism has been described by K. Minogue as "a collective sense of grievance against foreigners." It has little in common with medieval loyalty to dynasty or religion or with the room-temperature nationalism of convenience associated with the countries of northwestern Europe. It provides a perfect foundation for totalitarianism. . . .

The ruling elites of the Third World would be horrified if in their single-party states any genuine "political participation" by common men should come about or even be demanded. Except insofar as it might be helpful to them in retaining power (an unlikely occurrence), they are completely unconcerned about raising consumption standards in their states. It may be fashionable for them to talk of world peace, but they universally prepare for small wars, across borders, within states, or some combination of the two. The Axis may have lost World War II, but fascism, correctly defined to include most of the self-labeled Marxist parties and regimes of the world, has inherited most of the earth. No amount of illumination of their hypocrisies in the General Assembly will change the behavior of Third World governments. Any converted regime would soon be replaced by a waiting competitor more aware of the realities of Third World politics.

Ambassador Moynihan has demonstrated his common sense and his intellectual capacity by slashing away the papier-maché mask of the Third World. . . . But he does not yet see, or is reluctant to see, the sheer horror which lies behind the mask, and prefers to endow its visage with the likeness of the familiar. Mr. Bauer does see the gargoyle, though perhaps he does not yet comprehend its inevitability and its probable permanence.

Commentary should again be congratulated for forcing the reader to face up to what he would rather not think about, "because he knows that close behind a frightful fiend doth tread."

John W. Bowling
Troy State University
Troy, Alabama

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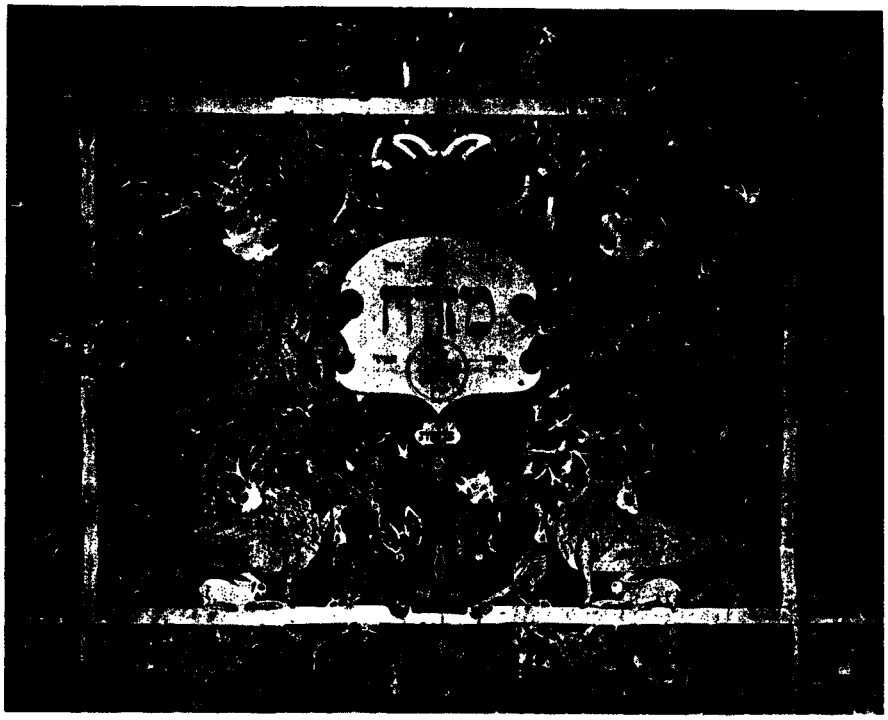

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

P. T. Bauer's letter is a welcome corrective to the distortions of fact and wishful fantasies of the *peccavi* crowd which have long dominated Western thought and policies toward the Third World. It is essensentially a rigorous completion of Daniel P. Moynihan's halfway critique rather than a challenge to it. Unfortunately Mr. Bauer's stance on the population question is absurd. He contends that extensive adoption of birth control by itself would have little effect on Third World living standards. On the contrary, it is the only measure which can produce an immediate visible improvement. That statement has been verified countless times (in reverse) by parents revising the family budget after each birth.

Let us suppose that in a poor country a child consumes half as much as an adult, averaging the years from birth to maturity. Then in a six-child family with an annual income of $600 each adult will consume $120 and each child $60. In a two-child family the figures are: adult $200, child $100. This represents an improvement of two-thirds. . . . In places where half-grown children work and largely earn their keep, their consumption during total dependence might be reckoned at a fourth of the adult level. Here the two-child family has an advantage of 40 per cent.

Secondly, in the six-child or larger family the wife has little capacity for income-producing work, and there is need for substantial savings for the establishment of new households as children marry.

Thirdly, a country with a rapidly growing population must reduce its consumption to acquire capital for creating new jobs, unless foreign gifts and investments are available. The alternative—often chosen—is massive unemployment and starvation.

Since these reductions in consumption are the direct result of population growth, it follows that elimination of the growth will increase the goods available for consumption without any other changes.

Mr. Bauer rests his case on the fact that some poor countries are thinly populated, some densely populated areas are relatively prosperous, and some victimized minorities are more successful than the masses. True, but not relevant to the above argument. Many troubles are inherent in the growth process itself, apart from worsening man-land ratios, anti-productive cultures, and resource scarcity.

Where population is stable a start can be made on other improvements. But the situation of a nation of starving illiterates whose population triples each generation (4 per cent annual growth)—or will, as soon as we get the serum to them—is simply hopeless.

VICTOR FOX

New York City

Critics & Comforts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Nowhere does Jack Richardson ["Looking Back at 'The Waste Land,'" August] prove that his "fashionable" liking of Eliot in the 50's is in any way different from his fashionable disliking of Eliot now. The true question to be put to any reader of Eliot is: are we still in a spiritual wasteland? If Mr. Richardson is concluding that we have grown beyond our adolescent despair, what affirmations in this new world does he see? Perhaps he is settling down into a self-congratulatory "whoopee" for his American comforts. If so, he should argue the case. Or is that not fashionable?

BRIAN BURKE

Covelo, California

JACK RICHARDSON writes:

Brian Burke's letter contains three misconceptions.

First, that my opinion of *The Waste Land* is in any way connected to its being in or out of fashion.

Second, that appreciation of a poem involves accepting its conclusions.

Third, that my American comforts have caused me to shout "whoopee." They have never occasioned anything more undignified than a whispered *Gott sei dank*.

Arab Propaganda

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As Rose G. Lewis ["Israel's Rights and Arab Propaganda," August] observes, Israel's apologists rarely rest their case on the slogan of "Jewish national self-determination." But this is no oversight. If there is a right of national self-determination, then it would be hypocritical to affirm Jewish self-determination and deny Palestinian self-determination. Yet that is Israel's official position. Mrs. Lewis nowhere hints that *she* favors a bi-national or even a separate Palestinian state. She is not applying an ideal she believes in but proposing more effective propaganda. This is as cynical as it is dishonest.

In any case, Zionism never was and never will be a national-liberation movement. This follows inescapably from the contradiction between the *goal* of an exclusivist Jewish state and the *fact* of a Palestine previously occupied by a numerous, settled, culturally self-conscious Arab population which developed its own national aspirations. And that contradiction determined, and still determines, a *strategy* of dependence on a powerful imperial patron, which is enough by itself to reduce Jewish national independence to an empty formality.

Mrs. Lewis seems to appreciate the logic of the matter, which she hopes to escape by disproving that "absolute national independence" was always an essential Zionist demand. Thus she attributes publicly conciliatory sentiments to Weizmann, Katznelson, and (straining credibility) even to Herzl and Ben-Gurion. Of course there were eminent Jewish figures, like Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, who sincerely favored bi-national amity; Mrs. Lewis neglects to mention that there were Arabs who agreed with them. But official Zionism and the great majority of Zionists—including the four leaders mentioned—always favored a Jewish state, the subordination of the Arabs, and dependence on the West. This is easily shown.

When Theodor Herzl founded Zionism with a pamphlet called *The Jewish State*, that is exactly what he wanted: "Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe adequate to meet our national requirements; we will attend to the rest." He also initiated the strategy of dealing not with the inhabitants but with the imperial overlord of Palestine. "If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine," the Jews would reform his finances. "We should there form a part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism," for which Europe "would have to guarantee our existence." Herzl later moderated his claims out of expediency, but while he was portraying a bi-national utopia in

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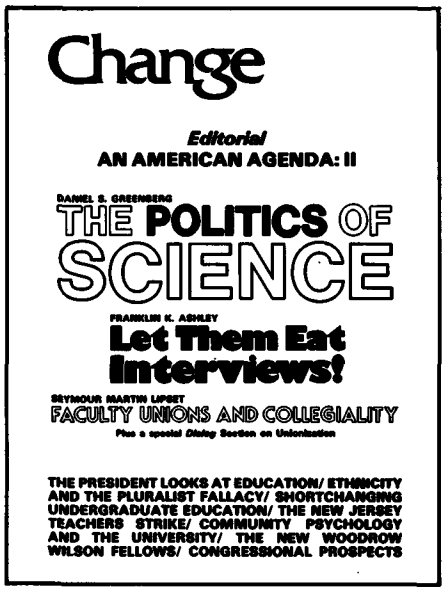
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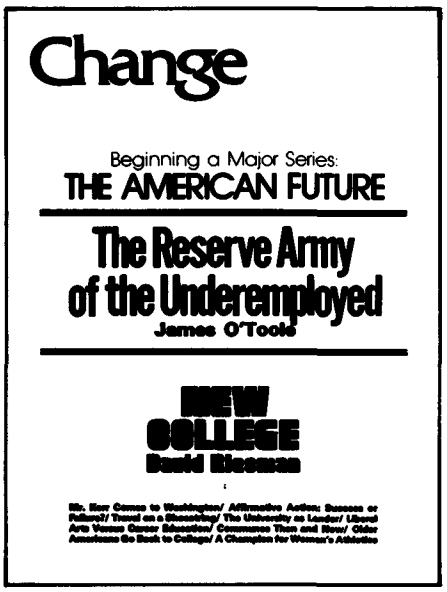

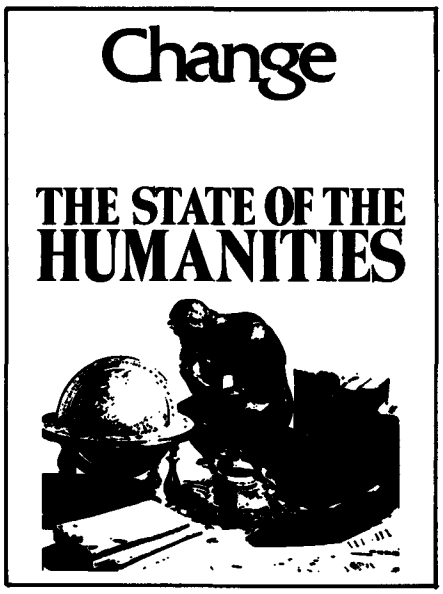

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Altneuland, he proposed in his diary to "spirit" the Palestinians out of Palestine by denying them work.

It is true that the Balfour Declaration promised, not a Jewish state, but an ambiguous "National Home." But since what was called "the non-Jewish population" comprised 90 per cent of the Palestinians, this was acceptable to Zionists as a means, not an end. When the 1922 Churchill White Paper made clear that the National Home was *not* to become a Jewish state, Chaim Weizmann pretended to go along, since it "would still afford us a framework for building up a Jewish majority in Palestine and for the eventual emergence of a Jewish state." Weizmann, whom Mrs. Lewis presents as a bi-national humanist, had demanded the year before "that the Jews be granted as such those rights and privileges which will enable them to make Palestine as Jewish as England is English." Since *all* citizens of England are English, the inference is obvious and ominous.

As for David Ben-Gurion: . . . His 1931 statement, which Mrs. Lewis quotes, about the need for "a superior international rule" to prevent Arab-Jewish conflict merely acknowledged that the *Yishuv* still needed the shelter of the British Mandate, as the 1936-39 Palestinian revolution made very clear. Ben-Gurion drafted the 1942 Biltmore Program which abandoned all subterfuge and demanded a Jewish state in an undivided Palestine which was more than two-thirds Arab. . . .

The state of Israel cannot afford to publicize the bi-national sentiments expressed, sincerely or otherwise, by Jewish nationalists in earlier periods. The contrast with Zionist history and Israeli society is all too obvious. A self-styled Jewish state which persecutes anti-Zionists and Arab nationalists through Emergency Regulations; a state which prohibits marriage between Jews and Gentiles; a state which has expropriated 50-70 per cent of the land of its Arab citizens; and a state with racist immigration laws is not even a liberal democracy, much less a secular or bi-national state.

The right to national self-determination is self-limiting—people are free to exercise it only as far as is possible without infringing the equal right of others. Therefore Jewish nationalists had no right to settle in Palestine for the purpose of founding a Jewish state without the consent of the people of Palestine. Such consent was never sought and, once the Arabs discovered Zionist aims, the Jewish presence met with active opposition. Even the Palestine Liberation Organization (contrary to Mrs. Lewis's unsupported assertion) now accepts the presence of those who are now Israelis. But, as always, they are obliged to reconcile their national aspirations with those of the people they have hurt so much. Whether this means a unified bi-national or "secular democratic" state, or an equitable repartition is not for me to say. But the very principle of national self-determination (which I happen to believe in) requires that Jewish nationalists belatedly reform their institutions in ways acceptable to their Palestinian counterparts.

ROBERT C. BLACK
Oak Park, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The arguments presented by Rose G. Lewis should have been made loud and clear long before this late date. There is today no more effective argument to be made for Israel than that some portion, at least, of world Jewry has as much *right* to national liberation and self-determination as any other people. Certainly the Jewish claim to some portion of Palestine should be recognized on this basis. How better to answer Arab rhetoric than to ask whether the Arabs are willing to provide a secure haven for Yemenite Jews—who lived in Yemen before Islam appeared—were they to return. Would Iraq take back its Jews? Would any other Arab country? Would these countries treat the Jews as equals to Arabs?

I suppose Mrs. Lewis's position seems clear to me because, as a non-Jew, I have not looked at the problem as a Zionist or as a protagonist of any other . . . Jewish tradition, but as a humanist and as a political geographer. The fact of the matter is that under extreme duress diverse Jews have created a people and a state in the only area of the world to which they have an indisputable, though ancient, historic claim.

As an aside, has anyone publicly confronted the Arabs with the question of Kurdish self-determination? (Or, where would Iraq be without the oil of Kurdistan?) How about self-determination for the Arabs of southwestern Iran? (There goes the Shahinshah's oil!) And then there are those non-Muslim, non-Arab blacks in the southern Sudan. The cry of self-determination, like that of imperialism, does not cut only one way these days. Nevertheless, both peace and justice require mediation and compromise, lest all of us find ourselves mere powder on the last page of human history.

LAURENCE GRAMBOW WOLF
Department of Geography
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Rose G. Lewis's article should open the door to a full discussion of defects in the way Israel's case has been presented to the American public by all the Zionist organizations in this country. As a national vice president of the American Zionist Federation and one who has held high office in the Zionist Organization of America, I feel qualified to speak on this matter. For one thing, no spokesman for Israel, either Israeli or American, should ever have used the word Arab without joining it to Muslim. The 650,000 Jews who lived in Palestine on May 14, 1948 were "Palestinians," and the hundreds of thousands of Jews who lived in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and other Arab states at that time had as much right to be called Arab as any other resident of those countries. . . . If this fact had been publicized over the years, the non-Jewish public in America might well have been less receptive to the propaganda of the Arab-Muslim states and the PLO. . . .

With rare exceptions, non-Jewish Americans have become bored with the oft-repeated story of how the Israelis turned the desert into a garden and Israel's technological advances. But if Christians were told that the Jews of Israel are the first line of defense for Christianity in the Middle East . . . their interest might be aroused. All that would have to be done to substantiate this assertion is to quote the appropriate *suras* of the Koran. . . .

SEYMOUR B. LIEBMAN
Miami, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found Rose G. Lewis's article greatly enlightening. I think very few Jews know how their fellow Jews were treated by the Arabs

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over the past thirteen centuries. Most, like myself, have been deluded by Arab propaganda into believing that Jews thrived under Arab dominion. Mrs. Lewis's article shocked me into thinking about the subject.

LOU HODES

Oakdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Rose G. Lewis's excellent analysis of "'Israel's virtual abdication of . . . moral suasion" goes to the root of the matter: not the methods but the ideological substance of Israel's information policy is at fault, and the deficiencies can be traced back to pre-state Zionist policies.

Not to see the forest for the trees is among most peoples a proverbial paradigm for debilitating shortsightedness; only in Zionism was it actually promoted to the rank of policy prescription. The slogan of "one tree and another tree, one cow and another cow" was presented as the acme of statesmanship, while the vision of Jewish self-determination—which alone could have generated the giant diplomatic and economic efforts that were needed between the wars—was denigrated and suppressed. As part of the peace settlement after World War I, the international community also recognized the Jewish people's right to self-determination, but the "practical" Zionists who were in charge soon ceased to argue the moral, political, and strategic case for Jewish statehood as the basis of immigration and land development in Palestine. This made possible today's mythology of the Western colonizing infiltrators, without warrant in justice, who abused the hospitality of a native people to impose in the end the rule of the newcomers.

It is only fair to mention that one of the explanations for the twisted Zionist policy between the wars was the need to establish and maintain cooperation with the "non-Zionists" who for various reasons shied away from the idea of a Jewish state. Whatever doubts there were in the past, it is probably true to say that the legitimacy of Zionism as a national-liberation movement and the Jewish right to self-determination which it represents are now a part of Jewish political thought generally. These days Jewish unity does not require that the concept of "Zionism" be handled with a degree of detachment that leaves its definition to the enemies of Israel.

It would be petty to question an inaccuracy in Mrs. Lewis's citation of the Churchill-Samuel White Paper of June 1922, were it not of special contemporary relevance. Its correction actually strengthens her argument. The contention that the White Paper "defined Jewish national liberation in the most minimal terms" is not borne out by a reading of its terms, although this was the impression which Zionist policy permitted to grow in order to excuse political setbacks.

The White Paper—to be read as part of a Parliamentary Command Paper containing eight other documents—was certainly full of what officials these days like to call "creative ambiguity," but nowhere did it say or imply that the "Jewish National Home . . . was not to be a 'wholly Jewish Palestine.'" What it did state was "that the terms of the [Balfour] Declaration . . . do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine." This meant what it said; it suggested the possibility of a geographical limitation of the National Home rather than a reduction of its national contents. Both the Jews and Arabs of the country were told that "the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan was . . . excluded from Sir H. McMahon's pledge" to the Sherif of Mecca. This implied, although it received no mention at all, that Palestine east of the Jordan—the territories referred to in the Mandate draft as "lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine"—might have been included in the pledge and thus outside the Jewish National Home area.

The White Paper was firm on upholding the Jewish National Home policy in western Palestine, which it declared "not susceptible of change." The Royal Commission Report stated in 1937 that its "definition of the National Home has sometimes been taken to preclude the establishment of a Jewish state. But though the phraseology was clearly intended to conciliate, as far as might be, Arab antagonism to the National Home, there is nothing in it to prohibit the ultimate establishment of a Jewish state, and Mr. Churchill himself told us in evidence that no prohibition was intended."

Mrs. Lewis here lets the Zionist leadership off too lightly. There was no need to refute the Churchill-Samuel White Paper which was purposely vague and merely assured the Arabs that no Jewish nationality status was intended for them. But a Jewish state, i.e., the attainment of a Jewish majority and with it Jewish self-determination was not excluded. As the opposition—with Jabotinsky in the vanguard—insisted, there was no reason why Zionist leadership itself should define Jewish rights in minimal terms.

Equally, when the Jewish National Home provisions were suspended for "the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine," three months after the publication of the White Paper, this need not have been interpreted in the restrictive terms which eventually prevailed, since Article 25 of the Mandate did not allow for finality and since moreover it guaranteed the right of Jews to settle there as individuals. Even though the British government may have decided that Trans-Jordan was not to become part of the Jewish National Home, constant opposition to the verdict would have impressed upon public opinion that it still was a part of the Palestine Mandate, that it was not closed to any Arabs of Palestine, and that in eventually renouncing it, the Jewish Agency had conceded four-fifths of Palestine to the Palestinian Arabs. It would have made it rather difficult for Jordan to assume the stance of a "host-country" and for Arab propaganda to convert the refugee problem into one of "national homelessness."

Statehood has taught the leadership of Israel a great many lessons, but not yet the need to distinguish between the vagaries of day-to-day diplomacy and the presentation of the broad ideological principles and strategic facts of the state's existence.

PAUL S. RIEBENFELD

New York City

ROSE G. LEWIS writes:

On one point, at least, Robert C. Black is correct. Certainly I was talking about more effective propaganda. I said so. But I did not suggest that lies be told or facts be twisted. I merely recommended that attention be paid to the critical issues.

Mr. Black helps me to make my

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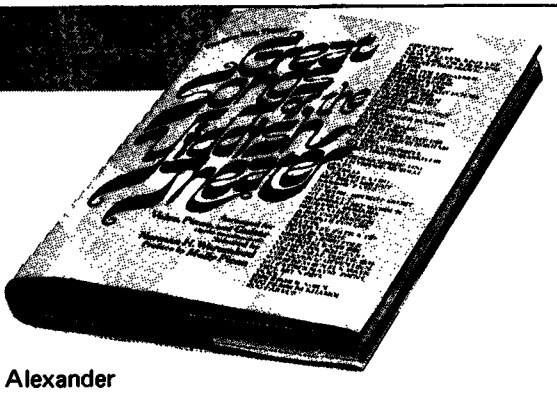

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case by raising his own banner very high. Zionism, he says, is not a national-liberation movement. Really? Where, then, *is* the national-liberation movement of the Jewish people? Or does he wish to say that the Jewish people may not have a national-liberation movement at all?

The question cannot be evaded. The choice lies, finally, between more power and control for Arabs in a twenty-first Arab state, on the one hand, and freedom and independence for Jews in a single Jewish state, on the other. If one wishes to make a judgment on the basis of justice and equity, if one truly believes in the right of *all* peoples to national self-determination, then the issue lies precisely here.

But Mr. Black's notion of self-determination is an interesting one. It demands, he says, that the Jewish people reform their institutions in ways acceptable to the Arabs. This, as it happens, is not a new idea. It describes rather well the nature of Muslim Arab rule over Palestinian Jews for the 1300 years of Arab occupation of the Jewish homeland.

The ways acceptable to the Arabs were carefully spelled out in a large body of law of which the cornerstone was the recognition of Muslim precedence and superiority. That being clearly understood, the Jews might then practice their religion so long as, for example, they did not build new synagogues, nor make their buildings taller than Muslim buildings, nor erect standing gravestones, nor have religious processions on festival days, nor permit their religious chanting or their lamentations for the dead to be heard by any Muslim. They were required to pay heavy and discriminatory taxes, they were forbidden to carry arms, they had to wear special identifying hats or badges or clothes and to avoid any appearance of equality with Muslims. Death was the punishment for such offenses as speaking of Islam with irreverence or touching a Muslim woman. And so on. That Jews were forced to live under the restrictions and the threats of such laws through thirteen centuries of Muslim imperialism shows that they cannot today be altogether insensitive to the ways acceptable to Arabs.

These laws provide a significant background and tradition, and they are by no means dead history. They continued in effect in Arab lands down to modern times. They are presumably still on the books in Saudi Arabia and in Yemen, where there was no 19th-century European occupation. It would be interesting to know their exact status at present, not only on the Arabian peninsula but also among some of the growing movements of Muslim orthodoxy.

Such social and legal discriminations, and more, applied to Christians as well as to Jews. Seymour B. Liebman is correct in pointing out that there is also an underlying conflict in the Middle East between Muslims and Christians—as, indeed, we see today in Lebanon. And he is right to suggest that we look to the Koran for the source of Muslim attitudes.

That's where Anwar Sadat was looking, for example, when he spoke to a Cairo audience on Mohammed's birthday in 1972. "We shall crush this Israeli overweeningness and this disorderly outbreak," Sadat said, "so that they go back to be once again as our Book told us: humiliation is destined for them, and poverty." Non-Muslims, the Koran states, must "pay tribute with their own hands till they are humiliated." There is much emphasis placed upon humiliation.

In Palestine itself, Arab overlordship meant that Jewish lands were taken from them and laid waste, Jewish holy places were usurped or desecrated, Jewish communities were again and again pillaged and destroyed, Jewish living was kept marginal and precarious with constant exploitation and discrimination. Unable to defend themselves because they were forbidden the weapons, Jews could live only crowded behind the walls of the cities—and, in the end, in only four of these. Yet the Jewish people never relinquished their claim or their loyalty. In every generation they have been as numerous in the land which they continued to call Israel as human courage and persistence made it possible for them to be. It is surely a justified Jewish claim against the Arabs that for so long the discriminatory and oppressive policies of the Arab and other Muslim empires and the harassments and persecutions of local Arab officials prevented the Jewish people from living in dignity and in strength in their own homeland.

It was therefore with good reason that—as Mr. Black's quotations point out—the Jewish people desired freedom and independence from Arab rule and argued for it in what ways they could. I must insist, nonetheless, that the record shows beyond question that responsible Zionists have been conciliatory and open to any compromise which would not have made the Palestinian Jews once again powerless over their own lives and destiny. Mr. Black would have presented a more plausible case if he had named and quoted some of those Arab leaders who, he implies airily, have in the past supported peaceful coexistence in a bi-national state or any other cooperative arrangement. As it is, he seems to be arguing that the Zionists did not mean what they plainly said and that the Arabs meant what they plainly did not say.

Laurence Grambow Wolf raises a valid point in regard to the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Well may we recall Yemen. Before they fled to freedom in Israel, more than 50,000 Yemenite Jews lived in rigidly segregated ghettos and were subjected to the most severe discrimination. One example will perhaps suffice: outside their own homes, Yemenite Jews had to be careful always to clothe themselves like beggars so that they might present the required picture of poverty and humiliation to the eye of any passing Arab. Does Yemen now believe in equality for the Jewish people? Would Yemen consider establishing a bi-national state with its native, ancient Jewish community?

The letter from Lou Hodes is typical of many similar comments which I have received. I believe it speaks for itself. It also explains why I have piled up the historical details in this response.

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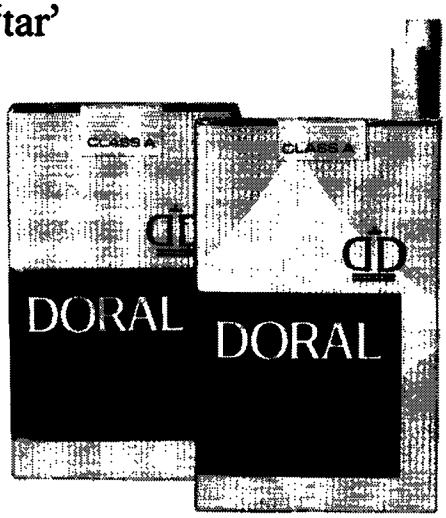

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Israel and the United States: From Dependence to Nuclear Weapons?

Robert W. Tucker

I

It is altogether likely that future historians will find in the Yom Kippur war, as most contemporary observers have already found, the great turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although affording no solutions to the seemingly intractable issues that have defined this conflict, the war clearly marked a radical change in the circumstances attending and conditioning it. The war, moreover, may be seen as the major precipitant that opened the way to implementing a new diplomatic design for the United States. If Mr. Kissinger did not anticipate the war, the record indicates that he quickly sensed the possibilities it held out for a new policy. The essential feature of this new policy was simplicity itself. It was not the Soviet Union but the United States that could satisfy Arab demands for the return of territories taken from them in 1967. This being so, it was the United States that could establish itself as mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict and thereby largely displace Russian influence, particularly in Egypt. Still, it was essential that Israel's adversaries first come to appreciate what the Soviet Union could not do for them, and this lesson they could only learn from experience. For Egypt, at least, the lesson seemed to have been largely learned in the years preceding the Yom Kippur war. The war provided the opportunity to confirm it while affording the occasion for a first demonstration of what the United States could do.

Given the principal goal of establishing the United States as mediator in the Middle Eastern conflict, the war had to be terminated in circumstances which would give the Secretary a viable bargaining position with both sides. At the same time, the structure of détente—Mr. Kissinger's principal monument—had somehow to be preserved. Finally, it was desirable, and even necessary, to demonstrate the very great dangers of any further resort to arms not only for the parties to the conflict but, in the potential for superpower confrontation, for the world.

These were not easily reconcilable objectives. Yet Mr. Kissinger succeeded on the whole in reconciling them. The arms deliveries to Israel were managed in such a way as to afford a striking demonstration of Israeli dependence on the U.S. (a dependence, it must be added, that the Israeli government went out of its way to confirm). This dependence was given further confirmation by the act of denying to Israeli forces the victory held out to them through the near encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army. That act of denial, it is true, was formally imposed by both superpowers. In effect, it was made possible by the United States and was evidently intended by Mr. Kissinger to preserve a viable bargaining position with the Egyptians in the postwar period. Mr. Kissinger's trip to Moscow and the subsequent imposition of a cease-fire by the superpowers were exhibited as the "fruits of détente." But though the structure of détente was thus preserved, the Soviet threat to send forces to Egypt and the American reaction in calling a strategic alert demonstrated the grave dangers held out for superpower confrontation by any further resort to force. The "lesson" has not been forgotten. During the past two years both the Secretary and his critics have been as one in emphasizing the terrible dangers inherent in another round of hostilities.

Although the sudden intrusion of the oil weapon cannot be said to have provided the initial promptings of the new policy, there is no question but that it gave this policy greatly added incentive and a seemingly compelling logic. For the lesson widely drawn from the Arab embargo set off by the October war has been that a future war between Israel and the Arab states would in all probability provoke another and more serious embargo. In this event the United States would be confronted with the choice of passivity or intervention, and while the risks of intervention in the Persian Gulf have been well advertised—indeed, exhausted almost with relish—there is no gainsaying the risks of remaining passive once again. Critics of intervention have argued, among

Robert W. Tucker is professor of international relations at Johns Hopkins and the author of, among other books, *A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise?* and *The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy*. Mr. Tucker's essays in Commentary this year, beginning with the widely-discussed "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention" (January), include "A New International Order?" (February), "Vietnam: The Final Reckoning" (May), and "Egalitarianism and International Politics" (September). Mr. Tucker wishes to thank Walter Laqueur for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

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other things, that our resort to force in the Middle East would strain relations with our major allies to a breaking point. Even if the argument is accepted without question, there remains the equally weighty argument that passivity before another and more stringent embargo would demonstrate America's impotence to the world and, particularly, to those very allies who are on record as being resolutely opposed to intervention. If intervention would subject the American alliance system to great strain, passivity would do so as well.

It is not difficult, then, to understand Washington's compelling interest in preventing another round of hostilities and its penchant for indulging in apocalyptic visions of the consequences further hostilities hold out. Yet these dangers—in part real, though in large part exaggerated and self-serving—must be balanced against what are seen as the opportunities presented by the new policy. In the competition, despite détente, with the Soviet Union, to establish oneself as mediator in the Middle East is to score a considerable success. That success, moreover, need not be bought at the price of détente. For whatever we may think of the official version of détente, it is necessary to recognize that even in the official version détente has been given only limited applicability in the Middle East. The parties have been at pains to employ verbal discretion, but not much more. Nor is it only with respect to our principal rival that the new policy holds out opportunities. Of even greater importance, perhaps, are the opportunities offered for retaining America's predominant position over major allies vitally dependent upon Middle Eastern oil. If it is the failure of the new policy that may one day be held responsible for shutting off oil to Western Europe and Japan, it is the success of this policy that can be exploited by its managers as a means of leverage in allied relationships.

II

It is in the light of these general considerations that the present relationship between Israel and the United States must be examined. That this relationship has changed and very markedly so in the past two years, if only in the sense that Israel has become more dependent on the United States, will not be disputed. Yet the dangers inherent in the relationship are, when not simply glossed over, seriously underestimated. For the congruence of interests that might make so increasingly dependent a relationship tolerable—if never desirable—no longer exists. Indeed, it has never really existed, though it more nearly approximated the ideal in earlier years. Today, it is to indulge in nothing less than sheer delusion to speak of a congruence of interests between the two states. Whereas Israel's preoccupation with insuring her physical security remains as dominant as ever, Washington's interests in the Middle East have become more diverse and complex than ever. The security of Israel is only one of these interests that must be balanced against others which may at any time be seen as threatened by the manner in which an Israeli government interprets its essential security requirements. Yet the relationship of dependence that has now developed is such that anything markedly less than a congruence of interests holds out very considerable dangers for both parties.

The administration's step-by-step diplomacy cannot square the circle of an ever more dependent relationship that is nevertheless marked by a substantial divergence of interest. One can only wonder at those who apparently believe that it can or, just possibly, might do so. The objective requirements of step-by-step diplomacy, if it is to register continuing success, are that the Arab states—certainly those states directly involved in this diplomacy—retain confidence in the ability of the American government to effect a return of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In turn, the ability of the American government to effect this return is a critical function of the degree of dependence—not confidence, let it be emphasized, but dependence—that Israel has on the United States. For without a marked dependence, Israel would surely remain unwilling to make territorial concessions—at any rate, to do so in the absence of those concessions on the part of the Arabs which the latter remain as unwilling as ever to make.

It is perfectly true that Israel would be dependent upon America in any event, given the newly found wealth and power of the Arabs. The point, however, is not that step-by-step diplomacy has created a dependence where there was none, but that the logic of this diplomacy is inevitably to make Israel more dependent. Nor is this point turned aside by the argument that the Geneva alternative might result in an equally dependent Israel. The answer to this argument is that it would indeed have the same result if employed to extract concessions from Israel in return for American aid and support, though *not* Arab concessions. The logic of step-by-step may be applied to the Geneva alternative just as it may be applied to proposals for an American guarantee.

All this is so evident that one wonders why step-by-step diplomacy has been charged with obfuscating the fact that the American government has abandoned its former support of the concept whereby peace in the Middle East would have to come through a process of direct negotiation between Israel and the Arabs. In retrospect, the question arises how serious this support has ever been, at least in Mr. Kissinger's mind. Today, at any rate, it is clearly displaced by a policy which can do no more than hold out the distant hope that the day may come when there will be direct negotiations between Israel

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and the Arab states. For an indefinite period, however, the diplomatic reality will be an America that negotiates separately with the parties to the conflict and to whom the parties must in practice bring their complaints.

In these respects step-by-step diplomacy is anything but ambiguous—the vice against which its critics have, for the most part, concentrated their fire. The logic of the relationships required by this diplomacy, if it is to work, is quite clear. What remains unclear and therefore ambiguous are the substantive results the step-by-step process is expected eventually to yield. To supporters, this lack of clarity, far from being a vice, is in the circumstances a virtue. Thus it is argued that the Middle East represents a classic example of a conflict which can only be resolved by the diplomatic process if deliberate ambiguity is maintained over the shape of the ultimate outcome. Where neither side to a conflict can acknowledge the outlines of a settlement that both may nevertheless be willing to accept in time, ambiguity is indispensable. What adversaries will not accept when presented as a whole, they may very well accept when unfolded over a period of time in increments—or steps. To this theorem is appended a corollary. Ambiguity over ends is a valid and, indeed, essential procedure where there is a reasonable expectation that differences between adversaries, though profound at the outset of the step-by-step process, can eventually be narrowed through agreements which slowly establish an increasing measure of trust and confidence.

Is THIS now familiar defense of ambiguity and, more generally, of step-by-step diplomacy plausible when applied to the Middle East conflict? One must doubt that it is. The ambiguity that may characterize step-by-step diplomacy is a virtue where the contending parties, though still unwilling and perhaps unable to acknowledge the outcome of a conflict, are nevertheless persuaded, for whatever reasons, that time is no longer working in their favor—that victory, as they have heretofore defined it, is no longer within their grasp. There is no reason for assuming that the Arab states have reached this point.* If we compare the position of the Arab world in 1967 with its position today, it is quite the contrary assumption that must be made. Even in 1967, in the aftermath of a crushing defeat and without the immense political leverage the Arabs have subsequently come to enjoy, there was not much evidence of a disposition to compromise. Why should one expect such a disposition to manifest itself in a period when Arab wealth and power are rapidly increasing, when Arab states are persuaded that October 1973 represented an Arab victory, and when the isolation of and pressures on Israel by a world that fears another embargo are only too apparent?

One possible answer is that it is precisely because of their new position that the Arabs will eventually prove willing to make concessions. What could not be done from a position of inferiority and sense of humiliation may now be done from a position and sense of growing equality. Another answer is that a disposition to compromise the conflict will come from domestic pressures to undertake internal reform and to concentrate on the task of modernizing economies. In the case of Egypt, these pressures are increasingly seen as creating a substantial question over Egypt's continuing commitment to the conflict. Then, too, there is always the answer that if the eventual return of the territories taken by Israel in 1967 is also attended by a settlement of the Palestinian problem, which can only be taken to mean the creation of a Palestinian state, the principal sources of the conflict must dry up.

NONE of these answers can be dismissed. Any one of them represents a possible solution, and surely all taken together do so. At the same time, none carries much plausibility. An increase in power and a growing sense of equality with the Western states is a thin reed on which to base expectations of a new Arab willingness to compromise the conflict with Israel. Whether domestic pressures might induce, or force, this or a future Egyptian government to alter its commitment to the conflict must depend, in the first place, upon Egyptian willingness to abandon long-held claims to leadership of the Arab world. Even if it is assumed that so wrenching a move could be made, the question remains whether an inward-oriented Egyptian leadership could make much progress domestically without very substantial outside assistance. It may be that an increasingly desperate domestic situation in Egypt will eventually prompt this or a succeeding regime to move against one of its oil-rich neighbors. But it is very difficult to say what bearing this might have on the conflict with Israel.

The insistence upon the centrality of the Palestinian issue to any resolution of the Middle East conflict at least serves the purpose of avoiding the question: why should the Arab states be satisfied by a return to the pre-1967 boundaries if they were not satisfied then? In stressing the key significance of a solution to the Palestinian issue, one obviously goes beyond the pre-1967 situation. Still, the question persists why this issue is commonly regarded today as so important. The answer cannot be the intrinsic justice of the Palestinian claims, since these claims fell on largely

*Curiously, the belief that time is on one's side is more often attributed by Western observers to the Israelis than to the Arabs. In fact, the belief is entertained only by the minority of hardliners in Israel and even among many of them one is left in doubt over whether they are true believers. Even so, the critical point here is not the pervasiveness of the belief—whether among Arabs or Israelis—but the objective basis, or lack thereof, for it.

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deaf ears for two decades. It was not until the Palestinian guerrillas began to constitute a nuisance, and more, to the West, circa 1969-70, that the justice of their claims found an increasingly sympathetic audience. But the quantum jump in Western sensitivity to these claims clearly followed the October war and reflected the rising influence of the Arab states, an influence based on the threat to employ the oil weapon. To say this is in no way to pass on the justice of the Palestinians' claim to self-determination; it is only to identify one of the moral wellsprings of a cynical world. The Palestinian issue has become central largely because the Arab states find it expedient to make the issue central and most of the world in turn finds it expedient to agree.

THERE is no apparently plausible reason, then, for the assumption that step-by-step diplomacy will lead the Arab states to make concessions in the future which they have been unwilling to make in the past. It may be the case that this diplomacy "buys time" and that to those who believe the risks of another Middle East war are intolerable there need be no further justification. On another view of these risks, however, the question must arise, buying time for what? Unless we are to retrace largely the same responses that have been given above, we are left with the corollary of the step-by-step theorem: that incremental agreements will eventually result in an increasing measure of trust and confidence between the contending parties. As one administration official, in rather more pragmatic terms, has put it: "Success will breed success, some peace will breed more peace." Why should this be so, however, if either side believes that time is working in its favor? In this case, success may only breed more exorbitant demands.

There is a far more telling objection, though. The trust and confidence that this particular version of step-by-step diplomacy may be expected to bring is not trust and confidence between adversaries. It is trust and confidence between each contending party and the state that has initiated and presides over this diplomacy. It is not trust and confidence between Egypt (or Syria, or Jordan) and Israel that we may reasonably look forward to but, at most, trust and confidence between each of these states and the United States. Even so, such trust and confidence as America may enjoy will depend upon the nature of the steps this country can induce the respective adversaries to take. And since, in the absence of a credible threat of force against the Arabs, America's power of "inducement" as well as its power to guarantee each step are functions of the dependence of Israel, we are once again back to the logic of the relationships required by the new diplomacy and the dangers it holds out both for Israel and for the United States.

III

THERE are two reasons that go far toward explaining the persisting tendency to underestimate the dangers in Israel's increasing dependence on the United States. One is the belief that a special relationship holds between the two countries, a relationship that transcends ordinary calculations of state interest. The other is the conviction that Israel is no ordinary small nation but one that has an almost obsessive concern over compromising its independence through loss of self-reliance. To be sure, this trait not infrequently makes dealing with Israel quite difficult and aggravating. Still, these drawbacks are thought to be more than compensated for by the assurance they give that the dependence will not bring the psychological and moral erosion of the dependent it has so regularly brought on other occasions.

Taken together, then, the belief in a special relationship and the conviction of a special nation open the prospect of entertaining a markedly dependent relationship without incurring the dangers normally held out by such relationships. Understandably it is the recent experience of Vietnam that forms for many the reference point and standard of comparison when considering the American-Israeli relationship. That the referent and standard may prove relevant to Israel remains, however, a minority view. Israel is not Vietnam, the prevailing consensus would have it, and the relationship of Vietnam to the United States cannot be meaningfully compared with the relationship of Israel to the United States. This being so, the dangers revealed by Vietnam are deemed largely irrelevant in the case of Israel.

Does it matter, though, that Israel is not Vietnam and that the two cases must be distinguished? Perhaps it is precisely for the reason that Israel is not Vietnam that the growing dependence of Israel holds out serious dangers for the United States. For whatever the emotions aroused in this country over Vietnam, the emotions that might one day be aroused over Israel could make that former experience pale by comparison. Vietnam was, after all, "a far away country" for Americans and the Vietnamese were "a people of whom we knew nothing," to paraphrase Neville Chamberlain's statement about Czechoslovakia at the time of the Munich crisis. Can we say the same of Israel? If not, the internal divisiveness brought by Vietnam could appear almost benign alongside the divisive potential of Israel. Considering this potential, it would almost seem comforting if Israel could be placed in the same relationship to this nation that Vietnam was placed.

Moreover, does it matter that Israel is not Vietnam when considering the dangers of dependence for Israel? However obsessive Israel's concern with remaining independent, the reality of dependence cannot be obscured. It would be different if the Israelis had a viable alternative to the United

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States and to which they could turn, if only temporarily, when pushed too far. The North Vietnamese had such an alternative, and the fact that they did must in considerable measure account for their success in maintaining a remarkable political independence while being militarily very dependent. But the Israelis do not enjoy the advantages conferred by a strategy of alternate dependencies. On what grounds is it so confidently asserted that they will nevertheless successfully resist the debilitation a marked dependence has so often brought to others?

It is not enough to reply by pointing to the profound consciousness of a past that is seen so largely in terms of betrayal and insecurity. The issue is whether this consciousness will prove a reliable source of resistance and fortitude in straitened circumstances. There is no assurance that it will, unless it is assumed that a history of persecution and fear must eventually give rise to, or find its compensation in, an extraordinary fortitude and sense of self-confidence. It may do so, though the instances in which the reverse has been true are, to say the least, rather impressive. If the Israelis are expected to prove so resistant to the dangers of dependence, one can only hope for a more reassuring argument than this. Indeed, it is significant that many in this country who press the argument do not do so with consistency. The same observers who assure us that Israeli confidence and self-reliance cannot be broken, however dependent that nation may become, also assure us—in another context—that because of a history (and thus an expectation) of victory that goes back to the founding of the state, Israeli morale could not survive a defeat in war. A boundless confidence and self-reliance are projected in the one situation, and the utter disappearance of these traits projected in the other. Whereas the former assurance serves to defend the pursuit of a policy designed to make Israel increasingly dependent, the latter assurance serves as a warning to the Israelis against thoughts of any further recourse to arms.

The truth is that no one can say with confidence what the effects of prolonged and marked dependence might promise for Israel. What can be said is that in the light of the history of dependent relationships, the dangers held out are very real. These dangers cannot be made light of by appeal to a special character the Israelis are assumed to possess. That character has already given signs of wavering under the pressures of the past two years. It may be argued that despite these pressures the wavering would not have occurred with the leadership of yesterday. The prospect of more Ben-Gurions is not very promising, though. Instead, the outlook is for a competent leadership, like the present one, that reflects the growing bureaucratization of state and society.

Nor should it be forgotten that in this case the issue of dependence cuts deeply since it raises the issue of the very legitimacy of the Jewish state. The basic idea of Zionism was not simply to create another small nation-state, but one in which the Jews would live without fear and one in which they could be masters of their own destiny rather than protected individuals. Admittedly, the world has become a much more dangerous place since the early days of the Zionist movement. This being so, it will be said, small states must reconcile themselves to varying degrees of dependence. Still, there *are* degrees of dependence; in Israel's case, particularly, a dependence that has no readily discernible limits must place in question the very *raison d'être* of the state.

THERE remains the special relationship that is counted on to rule out the dangers of dependence. The first thing that must be said of the special relationship is that even if one takes its existence for granted, it does not preclude the debilitation of the dependent. It may preclude the abandonment of Israel to forces threatening the latter's survival as a state. It does not preclude pressures on Israel to make concessions that in Israeli eyes are one-sided and that, in consequence, are seen to result in a diminished security. For this reason, the special relationship does not preclude the "wearing down" of Israel, just as it does not preclude the corrosive effects that follow from the realization that one's destiny is in the hands of others. No doubt, the pressures applied to Israel would be attended by the conviction of many that, given the special relationship, such pressures were for Israel's ultimate benefit. But this conviction, particularly to the extent it is sincere, may only mean that the pressures applied to Israel are applied with a good conscience, for the risks Israel is required to take for peace may therefore be justified by the assurance that a special relationship makes the taking of these risks only reasonable.

The principal bases of the special relationship are the common dedication of the two countries to free institutions and the ties of American Jewry to Israel. Are these bases such as to insure against the hazards of dependence in a context of otherwise divergent interests? Once again, the hazards of dependence should not be identified simply with physical survival. It is not only Israel's bare physical survival that is at issue here, though one day it could possibly come to this, but the loss of control that may lead to the psychological and moral erosion of a people. Certainly, the special relationship is a modest affair if all that it can promise is that, whatever else may happen, Israel will not be physically destroyed.

Whether the special relationship can even promise this remains an open question. Still, assuming that it can do so, there is always the further question: which Israel, physically or territorially, will not be destroyed? It is interesting that anything more than physical security is treat-

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ed with a marked impatience. If one raises the issue of the debilitating effects of dependence, one is reminded that independence is "a state of mind," a matter largely of "perceptions." Presumably, then, if Israelis would adopt the proper outlook, they could adjust to the new realities without danger. Of course, what is really conveyed by this argument, though those making it wish to put the point delicately, is that the independence of small states may require severe limitation when such independence is seen to jeopardize the interests of great powers.

These considerations apart, there is the question of the extent to which the United States is committed today to the preservation of free institutions in the world. The question is not rhetorical, for it is clear that the "new maturity" has already moved some distance away from an earlier outlook in which security was broadly defined to include the protection of those societies that shared our institutions and values. Even in an earlier period, though, it is misleading to find in the preservation of free institutions the mainspring of American policy. The nation's physical security and material well-being provided the compelling interest of policy, and it is this interest that was crucial in leading the United States to intervene in World War II and subsequently to join the cold war with the Soviet Union. In the period following World War II, the commitments made to Western Europe and Japan responded, in the first place, to conventional balance-of-power calculations. The preservation of free institutions was no doubt an important consideration in making these commitments, but it was a narrower conception of interest that must above all acount for them. In Israel's case, this narrower conception of interest has never been fully apparent to American policy-makers; hence the cautious and often uneasy relationship entertained with Israel since the early 1950's. It is less apparent today than ever, yet we are asked to believe that its absence will be satisfactorily compensated for, and the dangers of dependence safeguarded against, by a common dedication to free institutions. On the face of it, the argument cannot but provoke skepticism.

It is true that the public continues to manifest considerable sympathy and support for Israel. This sympathy and support, surveys indicate, reflect a varying motivation of which a common dedication to free institutions is an element. There is no evidence, however, that the public gives this element marked emphasis. Nor is there much evidence that the public is committed to the idea of a special relationship with Israel. It is largely by contrast with the reservations widely held toward the Arab world, reservations recently reinforced by resentment over the manner in which Arab states are seen to have used their oil power, that the relationship with Israel appears special. Then, too, it is Israel's past self-reliance that has appealed to the public, particularly by contrast with the experience in Vietnam.

How would the public react to a dependent Israel, yet an Israel that is increasingly at odds with American diplomacy in the Middle East? Although the uncertainties attending public opinion need not be labored, it takes a determined optimist to resist the conclusion that this formula holds out anything but trouble. Dependents are expected to be grateful for what they are given. And if they are unable or unwilling to show gratitude, they are at least expected not to cause trouble for those who have supported them. But the divergence of interests today between Israel and the United States is bound to place the former in the position of "causing trouble," that is, of appearing resistant to American interests in the Middle East. Even without the guidance of an administration intent upon equating these interests with achieving a just peace, opinion is likely to react adversely. With a determined effort by government to guide public opinion, Israeli resistance to American pressures will be increasingly seen, as it is already seen by a substantial portion of the foreign-policy elites, as intransigence.*

In this situation, the ties of American Jewry to Israel can scarcely be expected to moderate the clash of interests between the two states. If anything, these ties may be expected to aggravate further Israeli-American relations. Israel will be tempted to appeal for more than the normal support it receives from American Jews. In turn, an American government as well as a majority of the American public will resent this appeal and the resentment will be directed not only against those making the appeal but against those to whom it is made. The ties of American Jewry to Israel may well prove to be least effective precisely when they are most needed by Israel.

In any event, the divisive domestic potential of this situation for America is clear. Insofar as it continues to support the Israeli position, a substantial and important minority will be increasingly vulnerable to the charge of subordinating American foreign policy to the interests of Israel. Moreover, there will be a certain ironic justice in the charge, given the many critical American

* The well-publicized survey of Louis Harris (see "Oil or Israel," the New York *Times Magazine*, April 6, 1975) does not contradict these remarks. Harris writes: "An Israel which appears to shun all peace efforts and boasts of its military power could well be told to find its backing elsewhere. In sharp contrast, an Israel which appeared eminently reasonable about negotiations can easily make its case for continued military aid. At the moment, Israel is benefiting as much from anti-Arab sentiment over oil as from pro-Israeli feeling in its own right." But whether Israel appears "eminently reasonable" about negotiations will depend in large measure upon how an American government and opinion leaders define what is reasonable, and this cannot be separated from how American interests are defined.

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interests that are presently linked to the Middle East conflict. Nor is it sufficient to reply that if America were pursuing the proper foreign policy today, a divergence of interests between the two countries would not arise. Even if this reply were well-taken, it is unavoidably open to the criticism that it equates what is good for Israel with what is good for the United States.

IV

WOULD the dangers implicit in the present American-Israeli relationship be lessened by an American security guarantee to Israel?*

It should be clear that a guarantee is not involved in the Sinai accords, for this nation bears no formal responsibility for the agreements that result from the step-by-step process. It is responsible, at best, only for those unilateral undertakings it may make with the individual parties. The American position thus cannot be equated with that of a guarantor, whether in a formal sense or in a practical sense. It cannot be so equated in a formal sense for the simple reason that we have not agreed to guarantee the steps so far taken. It cannot be so equated in a practical sense because—short of a credible threat of force—we have no reliable sanctions to invoke against the Arab states should they choose not to abide by an agreement. Our credibility as a guarantor extends only to the state whose dependence on us is such that only *in extremis* would it choose to violate an agreement and thereby jeopardize our step-by-step diplomacy.†

A guarantee would not lessen Israel's dependence on the United States. This is acknowledged by the proponents of a guarantee who conclude that Israel's dependence on this country is in any event unavoidable. At the same time, it is argued, there is dependence and dependence. Although a guarantee would establish a dependent relationship, those urging a guarantee contend that it would make dependence much less dangerous for the two parties than the dependence attending step-by-step diplomacy.

The initial issue that is raised by proposals for an American guarantee is why it is necessary at all if, as many supporters of a guarantee insist, the United States has always been committed to the preservation of Israel. If the United States will not permit Israel to be destroyed, why should an explicit commitment to this effect now prove so important? Surely it is not enough to point to the emergent power of the Arab states. If the commitment to Israel is of long standing, and regarded as reliable, then whatever the change in the position of the Arab states, Israel's position remains essentially unimpaired. Moreover, it remains essentially unimpaired regardless of the support given Israel's neighbors by the Soviet Union.

Are the purposes of the guarantee, then, to appease the Israelis' insatiable need for security reassurance while clearly depriving them of further justification for remaining in the occupied territories? Unquestionably, for some proponents these are the purposes a guarantee is designed to serve. In their view, the guarantee is little more than a manipulative device for forcing Israel into a more tractable position. Since it is taken for granted that the Israelis will not obtain the concessions they have demanded of the Arabs as a condition of withdrawal, they must be given reassurance by the United States. But this explicit reassurance is seen to add very little to the preexisting American commitment. The guarantee is significant primarily in that it formalizes this commitment. Not surprisingly, those who take this view manifest only a modest concern over the credibility of the guarantee to others and the many difficult problems its implementation may be expected to raise.

Whether or not this view of an American guarantee should be considered as a thinly-veiled de-

* We discuss in these pages only proposals for an American guarantee rather than proposals for a superpower (Soviet-American) guarantee and various kinds of multilateral, or collective, guarantees. Considerations of space apart, the reasons for so limiting the discussion may be stated in summary form. The history of guarantees indicates that unilateral guarantees have been more credible and effective than those based on a consensus, whether of two (or more) great powers or a number of middle-rank and small states. A general experience is not decisive for a specific case, but it cannot safely be ignored. Proponents of a Soviet-Amercian guarantee in the Middle East almost always fall back, at some point, on the reliability of America as a guarantor should the Soviet Union withdraw from a joint guarantor force. In so doing, they acknowledge the obvious difficulties of a Soviet-American guarantee even while championing it. Moreover, the argument that a unilateral guarantee to Israel could be effectively exploited by the Soviet Union depends very largely upon what is guaranteed and how the guarantee operates. One might just as well argue that an American guarantee, attended by Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and employed to constrain Israel in the use of force, would consolidate America's present position in the area. Then, too, it is significant that proposals for either superpower or multilateral guarantees are singularly vague about the nature and size of guaranteeing forces. One can only infer that these forces would be quite modest. In this particular case, however, modest forces will not do. Is it even remotely plausible to assume, though, that the superpowers would establish a substantial *joint* force, or that the middle and small states would bear the brunt of such a force?

† It may be argued, however, that in the event of serious Arab violation of an agreement we could credibly threaten sanctions by proxy, that is, through Israel. If this is true, our dependent remains the principal guarantor—our guarantor as well as its own—for Arab fidelity to agreements over which we have presided. There is some merit to this argument. But its limitations are clear. We may be counted upon to be extremely loath ever seriously to consider invoking our sanction by proxy, if only for the reason that to do so would mean the effective end of the new policy. Then, too, the "unleashing" of Israel—for that is how it would be seen in the eyes of the Arabs and, very likely, of most of the world—raises for Washington the specter of an oil embargo with its incalculable consequences for American interests.

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ception is a fine point. For those who apparently are persuaded that the Israelis have exaggerated their security problem out of all proportion, particularly given the American commitment not to permit Israel's destruction, the charge of deception may seem excessive. The charge of obtuseness does not. In 1967 the American government refused to commit itself to the forcible reopening of the Straits of Tiran. Would it have nevertheless prevented Arab intrusion into Israeli territory? In 1973 the American government delayed for more than a week in sending war material to Israel. Would it have nevertheless committed forces against Syria had the latter taken the Golan Heights and carried its attack into northern Israel? If these questions are absurd, so is the manner in which Israel's security and the American commitment to that security are often presented. The American commitment has never been a commitment to defend Israel. It has not even been a clear commitment to provide Israel with such war material as it may need to defend itself, else the initial days of the 1973 war would be inexplicable.

Another view of the guarantee does acknowledge that whatever the American commitment to Israel, past or present, it is inadequate as a substitute for the security conferred by the territorial buffers. Though in this view as well the guarantee is a means for making Israel tractable, it is also put forth as a real and necessary substitute for the security presently conferred by the occupied territories. By explicitly insuring Israel's security, the guarantee presumably opens the way for the return of the occupied territories and the eventual creation of a Palestinian state. It does so though the deeper sources of the Arab-Israeli conflict are expected to persist. The guarantee, as we are often reminded by its supporters, cannot be expected to remove these deeper sources. It is not designed to effect a normalization of relations. Instead, it is intended to provide an alternative to the peace Israel has for so long demanded, since *that* kind of peace will remain unattainable for many years. Nor would there be much point to a guarantee, were it not for the assumption that the condition attending the guarantee will be, at best, a *de facto* peace.

WHAT is the difference between the strategy of the guarantee and the strategy of step-by-step diplomacy? With respect to what is required of Israel, there is no apparent difference in principle between the two. The concessions Israel is eventually expected to make as a result of step-by-step diplomacy are, by and large, the concessions required by the guarantee. From this standpoint, the latter strategy may be regarded as a telescoped version of the former strategy. Whereas the guarantee draws the concessions at once, and as a condition of making the guarantee, step-by-step draws them incrementally over a prolonged period.

Nor is there an apparent difference in principle between the two strategies with respect to what is expected of the Arabs. Neither expects the Arabs to recognize Israel (certainly not formally so), to make treaties of peace, and to take those measures normally consequent upon such actions. It may even be argued that there is no apparent difference in principle between the two strategies with respect to what the Israelis are to be given by the United States in return for concessions made to the Arabs. For step-by-step diplomacy does not reject the notion of a formal guarantee. Instead, it reserves this issue to a much later point, while content to give largely informal "assurances" along the way. Assuming that step-by-step diplomacy is not averse to the notion of a formal guarantee, the principal difference between the two strategies is one over when the guarantee is to be offered.

Is the latter difference critical? To many supporters of the guarantee strategy it is, for a guarantee given at the outset would presumably enable Israel to escape from the dilemma imposed on her by step-by-step diplomacy—that is, either of appearing intransigent or of running considerable risks. But one horn of that dilemma is surely apparent in the guarantee strategy, unless the reliability of the guarantee is placed beyond question. For Israel is being asked to make vital concessions at the outset as a condition of receiving the guarantee. Although the risks inherent in step-by-step diplomacy are not to be denied, these risks are taken only incrementally. Time holds out the prospect at least of somehow compensating for them. When they are taken all at once, this prospect necessarily diminishes.

If a guarantee is to reduce the risks Israel incurs through step-by-step diplomacy, it must be quite credible to all of the concerned parties. Proponents concede there is a problem of making a security guarantee credible to Israel, and so there is. Quite apart from the permanence of a guarantee, once given, the Israelis are skeptical that the United States would employ force against the Arab states. This skepticism is scarcely allayed by concentrating on the strictly deterrent effects of a guarantee almost to the exclusion of examining American power, and willingness to use that power, to defend Israel should the deterrent fail. Yet it is on the known willingness and the power to defend, and if necessary to punish, that the power to deter must rest.

Those who speak with such confidence about the deterrent effect of an American guarantee appear to assume that the magisterial authority of the United States remains undiminished. Yet many who make this assumption have insisted during the past year that successful American intervention in the Persian Gulf must prove militarily beyond our capability as well as being politically disastrous. This response has not exactly contributed to our magisterial authority. A deterrent

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threat must be very seriously eroded if those against whom it is made have already been assured of our limitations. How reliable would an American guarantee to Israel be if invoking it were to bring on an oil embargo that, by our own admission, we either would not respond to by forcible intervention or could not do so without disaster?

THE threat of an embargo alone, then, must cast doubt upon the credibility of an American guarantee. In turn, the doubt raised by the prospect of an embargo illustrates an obvious, though critical, point. A guarantee will be credible only to the degree that there is a substantial identity of interest between the United States and Israel. Yet the absence of such identity of interest is at the heart of the difficulties presently besetting American-Israeli relations. Unless we assume that these difficulties will be subordinated to the imperative of the special relationship, they may well persist despite a guarantee. And if they do, will not the credibility of a guarantee be undermined from the outset?

It has been argued that the very condition of making the guarantee guards against this danger, since the guarantee will be made only if the difficulties presently besetting American-Israeli relations are largely resolved. Once Israel agrees to give up the occupied territories an identity of interest will emerge, and this identity will give credibility to the guarantee. One may doubt whether matters are quite this simple. The Arab-Israeli conflict will not disappear once the occupied territories are given up (and if it were to disappear what would be the purpose of a guarantee?). Besides, "giving up" the occupied territories is, as everyone knows, not to be taken literally, since quite apart from the issue of a Palestinian state there is little, if any, prospect for a full restoration of the 1967 boundaries. The issue of Jerusalem alone precludes this. The dangers of further hostilities, with the attendant threat of an embargo, will accordingly persist.

These considerations nevertheless suggest that the credibility its supporters assume the guarantee will have is a function of the concessions Israel is expected to make as a condition. The greater the concessions, this reasoning goes, the smaller the divergence of interests. The smaller the divergence of interests, the greater the credibility. The logic of the guarantee, therefore, is to place Israel in a very vulnerable and dependent position, since it is only by virtue of this position that the guarantee is extended and that it achieves real credibility. But this must mean that the guarantee will be attended by substantial American forces in and around the territory of the guaranteed state. It will not do to argue for the attractiveness of the guarantee by emphasizing the efficiency of Israeli forces, the implication being that, after all, these forces will continue to provide for Israel's security as they have provided for it in the past. If the guarantee is to serve as a substitute for the territorial buffers, and for the other concessions Israel is expected to make, then it should serve as a substitute, and this it can do only through a very substantial American military presence—a presence that, among other things, will leave no doubt over American capability effectively to react, if necessary, against the threat of an embargo. If, on the other hand, it is Israeli forces that are to provide for Israel's security, then the real "substitute" for the territorial buffers Israel is to give up is not the guarantee but Israeli forces. In this event the guarantee is indeed a fraud and for the reason that the purpose it is alleged to serve it will not in fact serve and is not intended to serve.

THERE seems no escape from the conclusion that an American guarantee to Israel is either a deception, however unconscious, or a very serious undertaking. It is a deception if it seeks to exchange the substance for the shadow, the occupied territories for a commitment of doubtful credibility. If it represents a serious undertaking, however, it must expect to encounter great difficulty in obtaining congressional approval. Certainly, it would not be approved at all unless the Senate knew at the time of ratification what it was approving. This it could only know if the details of a territorial settlement had already been worked out (and if the methods for policing such a settlement were also clearly defined). But what would induce Israel to agree to a settlement in the absence of a credible guarantee? Given the Israeli reluctance to enter into any guarantee, however credible, it is a bad joke to suggest that withdrawal might be undertaken in exchange for a contingent guarantee.

The problem of timing, though not insoluble, poses very considerable difficulties. It does so because the guarantee is expected to stabilize a territorial settlement once reached, yet to provide an indispensable condition for reaching such a settlement. These difficulties might be overcome by a guarantee that takes effect as the territorial settlement takes effect, though to bring this off would be a feat of almost heroic proportion. Even so, its achievement would leave entirely open the issue of the guaranteed state's dependence on the guarantor and the dangers held out by this relationship for both parties. A credible guarantee might represent one improvement over the present form of dependence in reducing the corrosive uncertainties of step-by-step diplomacy. Apart from this improvement, though, the dangers of dependence already alluded to would very likely remain. It is not a guarantee that holds out the promise of removing these dangers but a congruence of interests, which, it cannot be repeated too often, does not exist. A guarantee can "create"—or perhaps impose—a congruence of interests, though

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only at the risk of the guaranteed state's becoming a virtual protectorate of the guarantor.

V

It is one thing to warn against a relationship that is almost certainly destined for trouble and quite another to discern a viable alternative. Clearly, any alternative to the present relationship will have to come from initiatives taken by Israel rather than the United States. The immediate and tangible advantages to Washington of step-by-step diplomacy are such that one cannot expect them to be given up by the prospect of dangers which may or may not impress those entrusted with the conduct of policy and which, in any event, are still some way down the road. Yet the initiatives open to Israel are not exactly plentiful. A strategy of alternate dependencies, as already noted, appears foreclosed so long as the candidates—and there are very few—themselves remain dependent upon Middle Eastern oil. In the best of circumstances, Israel is not an attractive ally, and the present circumstances are evidently not the best. The idea, put forward by a number of observers here and abroad, that Western Europe might provide an alternative to the United States, if only in the sense of moderating the Arab position toward Israel, must largely ignore the influence of oil. Even if it had the will to do so, Western Europe is scarcely in a position to moderate Arab behavior.

In the absence of viable alternate dependencies, Israel can seek to limit its dependence on the United States principally by developing to the maximum extent feasible its own sources of arms. This it is of course doing, but there are limits to what can be done. In part, these limits are technological; in larger part, they are economic. Even if technological constraints were eventually reduced to negligible proportions, economic constraints could not be so reduced, since whether in its domestic development or foreign procurement of conventional weapons Israel cannot hope indefinitely to compete with the growing economic power of the Arab states. It is already apparent that an attempt to do so has put the Israeli economy under serious strain. The United States can provide the military aid that Israel cannot afford given its limited resources, but this only underscores the dependence of Israel.

In these circumstances, a new and hard look at the role of nuclear weapons in future Israeli military strategy is very likely. It is true that the present military balance in the Middle East favors Israel and will probably continue to do so for several years. Beyond this intermediate period, though, there is marked uncertainty. How will this uncertainty be resolved, if indeed it is consciously resolved at all? One possible resolution is that Israel will choose whatever policy appears to hold out the greatest prospect of limiting its dependence on others while keeping defense expenditures within manageable proportions. If so, the change from its present policy of maintaining a "nuclear option" to a policy based on a known nuclear deterrent will inevitably have to be given the most serious consideration.

It is safe to predict that such consideration will provoke a uniformly adverse reaction abroad. Even within Israel it may be expected to lead to controversy, though the depth and seriousness of the controversy will surely reflect what are seen as the consequences of dependence. If these consequences are found to be a progressive deterioration of the country's security position and of its morale, the controversy may well dissolve. But whatever the nature of the debate within Israel, the reaction abroad permits of little doubt, and this despite the now common expectation that Israel would employ nuclear weapons if the survival of the state were ever placed in serious question. Statements to this effect are by this time almost ritualistic. Yet they are regularly attended by the judgment that Israel would make a grave mistake by converting its present and widely advertised option to produce nuclear weapons into a reality.

How is one to make sense of all this? Is it by assuming that the world only recognizes, and is prepared to tolerate, the fact—since it is taken as a fact—that Israel's nuclear option would become a reality in the event survival itself were placed in serious question? If this is so, then the option presumably already serves as a deterrent against the limiting case, though how an option can safely serve as a deterrent is left unclear (a nuclear option being only a promised deterrent—an embryonic deterrent, as it were—and not the deterrent itself). This difficulty aside, the further implication is that the world does not recognize the need for Israel explicitly to move to a military strategy based on a nuclear deterrent and would condemn the move if taken. For such a step would be seen as leading to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, thereby destabilizing what military balance exists at present, while greatly heightening the dangers of superpower confrontation, whether in the context of a future Middle East crisis or simply by virtue of the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. In effect, the world is prepared to adjust to what Israel is already known to have done, to accept what in all probability would be done in the limiting case, but to resist what might still be done to insure against the dangers of a growing Israeli dependence on the United States and the hazards such dependence might eventually entail.

There is no need here either to repeat once again the general arguments against the proliferation of nuclear weapons or to examine the assumptions on which these arguments are based. Even if the arguments against proliferation are based in part on questionable assumptions, there is no gainsaying the contention that the greater

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the number of states possessing nuclear weapons, the greater the prospects these weapons will one day be used. States that do not have nuclear weapons evidently cannot be tempted to use them. At the same time, it is clear that the drift toward proliferation has not been checked and probably cannot be checked in the absence of world government. In the period ahead we may expect a number of states to acquire nuclear weapons. Some will do so if only because the possession of such weapons will be seen as indispensable to achieving a status of equality with those who possess nuclear weapons. Others will do so from the conviction that independence must remain incomplete without nuclear weapons. Still others will do so for reasons of security or, however frightening the prospect, for reasons of expansion. The motives of states in obtaining nuclear weapons in the future are very likely to be much the same as the motives of states in obtaining nuclear weapons in the past. It is a familiar story by now that the possessors of these weapons at any given time are loath to acknowledge this, but their reluctance to do so does not alter the point.

It is not the general arguments against proliferation that require much consideration in this case but the special dangers expected to attend an Israeli move to a military strategy based on a nuclear deterrent. No doubt, the general arguments may also be, and have been, applied. But unless one takes into account the special circumstances of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the distinctive circumstances of the Israeli position, these more general objections are not very impressive. The case for Israel's possession of a nuclear deterrent appears quite as strong, if not a good deal stronger, than for most of the present nuclear powers. To be sure, the latter are not small states whereas Israel is, and by hallowed custom the needs of small states are not to be equated with the needs of large states. Put in less delicate terms, small states are not to make nuisances of themselves whatever their needs. It may be that one cannot argue with power, but candor at least requires saying so rather than taking resort in a double standard of need.

ALTHOUGH on the face of it Israel's need for a nuclear deterrent is as compelling as that of any state, in the circumstances of the Arab-Israeli conflict the questions persist whether an overt move to a deterrent strategy would not on balance prove injurious to Israel's security interests while holding out special dangers for the region and, ultimately, the world. With respect to Israel's security, the standard case opposing an overt move to a nuclear deterrent stresses the irrelevance of a nuclear force for most of the military threats Israel faces. Against guerrilla operations, limited military strikes, and wars of attrition, nuclear weapons would prove of little, if any, utility. A nuclear force would therefore serve to deter only the one contingency of an all-out attack upon the "core areas" of the state. Moreover, in moving to a nuclear deterrent the Israelis not only risk provoking the Soviet Union to new forms of support for the Arabs—increased conventional arms support and perhaps even a nuclear guarantee—but would risk a break with the United States, since the latter must be expected emphatically to oppose the move. And even if an open break were avoided, Israel would still face the prospect of sharply reduced American arms support. Thus, a deterrent that would not deter the most likely of military contingencies would result in a declining capability to counter those very contingencies. Finally, to these considerations must be added the commonplace view that the overt move to a nuclear deterrent by Israel would provide in turn a compelling incentive for the Arabs to obtain nuclear weapons. The projected consequence is a balance of terror that will prove inherently unstable given the profound distrust between Israel and the Arab states.

To a certain extent, the above case draws its strength from the scenario of an Israel that one day dramatically confronts its Arab adversaries and the world with a nuclear deterrent. The scenario is highly unlikely, though, if Israel's past record in these matters affords an indication of its future behavior. There is no reason why Israel cannot move to the stage of a known nuclear deterrent in the manner it moved to the stage of a known nuclear option. To avoid giving unnecessary provocation, whether to adversaries or to friends, would be no more than elementary prudence. The move would be no less effective for being taken without fanfare and in stages, since the important thing is that it be known.

In considering what an Israeli nuclear deterrent would deter, we may remind ourselves that after twenty years of experience and speculation on this experience, strategic theorists are by no means confident they can define with great precision the scope and purposes of deterrence in the case of the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor are the governments of the major nuclear powers so confident, else they would not constantly go through the exercise of deciding upon the proper allocation of resources to non-nuclear forces. There is no reason, then, to ask for a precision in the case of Israel that cannot be found elsewhere. Nor is there reason to criticize a deterrent force for failing to deter what it is either not intended or not primarily intended to deter. Thus it is not a persuasive argument, even if true, to point out that an Israeli nuclear deterrent could not deter guerrilla operations, limited military incursions, or wars of attrition. What it can credibly deter is a direct attack upon the vital, or core, areas of the state as well as military operations that, in their scope and intensity, constitute a proximate threat to these areas. This may not be everything, but for Israel it is still a great deal.

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The view that this is all a nuclear force could deter is not persuasive, however. Unless we are to assume that past experience has no relevance to the present case, uncertainty over what is or is not peripheral and, accordingly, over what action might or might not risk a nuclear response, will itself have a deterrent effect. How much effect it will have we cannot know, but a deterrent effect it will have, for the the fear of escalation can be expected to operate here as elsewhere. A new and important inhibition on the resort to large-scale military operations, even though initially confined to border areas, will be operative. So, too, the Arab states will be inhibited from undertaking a long and costly war of attrition, since the latter—if of sufficient intensity—could lead to tensions and a process of escalation that could carry appreciable risk. Even with respect to guerrilla warfare, it is misleading to say that a nuclear deterrent would have little, if any, effect. Guerrilla forces do not inhabit a vacuum but the territory of sovereign states who have something to lose by permitting guerrilla movements to operate at liberty. When the possibility—even though small—arises that guerrilla operations may one day bring mass destruction rather than mere inconvenience, governments can be expected to take a rather different view of these activities.

In sum, while an Israeli nuclear force clearly would not deter all threats to the security of the state, and would not be designed to do so, it would nevertheless deter a great deal. It would probably do so, moreover, even if one assumes a substantial change in the conventional arms balance, a change that no longer leaves Israel in the favored position of today. For with nuclear weapons Israel would no longer require its present superiority in conventional arms. It is true that it also could not risk a position of marked inferiority, particularly in the context of a gradual relinquishment of the territorial buffers. But a position of marked inferiority would not occur unless the Soviet Union responded by a sharp increase in conventional arms support to the Arabs while the United States responded by an equally sharp decrease in such support to the Israelis. Of these two possibilities, it is the latter that is by far the more important, since even a sharp increase in Soviet conventional aid to the Arabs would prove significant only if the United States either withdraws all arms support to Israel or cuts such support to negligible amounts.

Some analysts have argued that the Soviet Union would go beyond this and respond by offering a nuclear guarantee to the Arab states until such time as the latter possessed nuclear weapons of their own. This argument is not given much support by past Russian behavior. Eastern Europe apart, the Soviet Union has refrained from extending nuclear guarantees. Besides, what if the Russians did extend a nuclear guarantee? If the guarantee applied to an offensive war on Israel's part, it might have a stabilizing influence in that it would serve to reduce Arab fears that Israel might use nuclear weapons for expansionist purposes. In the absence of an Arab deterrent, then, a Soviet guarantee could serve a useful purpose. On the other hand, a guarantee might, though this is very unlikely, extend to *any* first use of nuclear weapons by Israel, regardless of circumstance. But if this is intended to prevent Israel from using nuclear weapons even though being overrun, the guarantee will not prove credible.

It is, in fact, the American reaction that is the decisive argument in the case that has often been made against an Israeli nuclear deterrent. Yet that argument has seldom been examined with the critical care it deserves. That the American government is opposed to an Israeli strategy explicitly based on a nuclear deterrent is apparent. What is not apparent is why it is opposed and how strongly it is opposed. Surely it is not enough to argue that an Israeli nuclear deterrent would provoke an intensely hostile American reaction because it would be seen to threaten détente with the Soviet Union and, as a corollary to this, to increase the risk of a superpower confrontation in the Middle East. Why should it have these effects unless Israel were to use a deterrent for the pursuit of expansionist goals? But the prospect of this may be excluded if for no other reason than that such pursuit would, almost without question, lead to a rupture with America and thereby complete Israel's isolation in the world. Instead, a plausible danger at least is that a nuclear deterrent would tempt Israel to freeze the status quo, or much of it, though now without any real justification for doing so. This danger should not be exaggerated, since it too would eventually risk a rupture with America. Yet even if the worst is assumed—an Israel intent upon keeping the status quo though no longer able to invoke the "secure borders" argument as a justification for doing so—why should this threaten détente and increase the risk of superpower confrontation?

The principal response, though often inarticulate, is simply the fear that with an Israeli nuclear deterrent the superpowers would no longer be able to "manage" crises in the Middle East. The loss of this ability would carry the risk that future crises might well "get out of hand," with the result that the superpowers would ultimately find themselves directly involved. But an Israeli nuclear deterrent would not heighten the prospect of future crises getting out of hand. If anything, it would diminish this prospect since the Israelis would be in a position that permitted them to exercise restraint while the Arab states would be in a position that—with or without nuclear weapons—compelled them to exercise restraint. It is true that an Israeli nuclear deterrent would decrease superpower leverage, though that leverage would still remain considerable (after

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all, in the Israeli case there would still be a need for American support, though now reduced). Does it follow from this that détente would be threatened? It would not seem so. What does follow is that the great nuclear states oppose any change that threatens their managerial powers, however modest the change may be, because they equate these powers with stability and the cause of world peace.

The point is often made that by explicitly moving to a strategy of nuclear deterrence Israel would thereby surrender the advantages derived from the nuclear option. In this view, the nuclear option is a form of insurance against Israel's desertion by America and, more concretely, a bargaining chip in Israel's requests for conventional arms. That bargaining chip—in effect, a polite form of blackmail—would presumably be lost once Israel openly moved to a nuclear deterrent. And so it would. But the critical issue for Israel is not only whether a price would have to be paid by abandoning the nuclear option and moving to a nuclear deterrent. It is also how large a price will eventually have to be paid by refusing to go beyond the nuclear option. If the price is an ever increasing dependence attended by rising pressures to surrender the territorial buffers, though without adequate concessions in turn from the Arab states, will it be a wise bargain?

VI

An Israeli nuclear strategy would set limits for both America and Israel to a dependent relationship that is ultimately in the interests of neither state. With a nuclear deterrent, Israel's destiny need no longer rest in American hands. In turn, American responsibility would no longer be without distinct bounds.

The point is commonly made that an Israeli nuclear deterrent must prompt the major Arab states to follow Israel's path. But these states are altogether likely to do so, sooner or later, in any event. An Israeli nuclear deterrent would surely sharpen their incentive to do so. That incentive has already been created, however, by the Israeli nuclear option. Given the growing wealth and power of the Arabs as well as the ever increasing availability of nuclear technology, the acquisition of a nuclear capability cannot be indefinitely denied them. Then, too, the very distrust that is held to make a balance of terror inherently unstable in the Middle East provides a further reason for concluding it will be next to impossible to prevent these states from obtaining nuclear weapons.

In this respect, one must also question whether the stated reason is the real reason for assuming that a Middle East balance of terror must prove inherently unstable. The profound distrust between the Arab states and Israel seems no greater than the distrust between the Soviet Union and China, yet the balance of terror between the latter is not commonly regarded today as inherently unstable. It is true that in the Middle East distrust is also attended by a territorial status quo one side views as illegitimate and intolerable. Even so, this territorial status quo would not of itself make a balance of terror inherently unstable. An Egyptian government would not risk its national substance for the Sinai, nor a Syrian government for the Golan. A Palestinian leadership might risk all, were it in possession of nuclear weapons, but not the governments of the major Arab states.

It is not so much the distrust between the Arab states and Israel that is at the root of the presumed inherent instability of a Middle East balance of terror as the conviction of a distinctive Arab psychology which finds alien the rational calculation a balance of terror requires. It is useful, perhaps even comforting, to recall that a decade or so ago the question was also widely raised whether the Chinese could learn to cope with the demanding requirements brought by the possession of nuclear weapons. That essentially the same question should be raised with respect to Arab states is understandable, though one must still ask for the basis of this questioning. In recent years the Arabs have given the world some notable lessons in politically astute—and rational—behavior.

The arcane aspects of pan-Arabism apart, much of the conviction in the West of a distinctive Arab psychology—a euphemism in this context for Arab irrationality—is rooted in an inability to comprehend why the Middle East conflict persists when it has become so costly and enervating, and seemingly incapable of successful resolution. Whether its continuation suggests Arab irrationality is a moot question. What is clear is that this Western reaction is an illustration of the ancient adage that other peoples' conflicts always seem irrational.

We have no persuasive reason for believing that, in a nuclear environment, the major Arab countries would behave irrationally. We do have reason for believing they will have every inducement to behave with marked circumspection, just as they will have every inducement to bend their efforts to insure that others in the region do so. A Qaddafi may be willing to take foolish risks—though even this can be seriously questioned—but the major states that are exposed will not. In a nuclear environment, the less responsible activists would be seen as posing enormous dangers to all parties and the need to control them would soon be expressed in policy. Far from proving destabilizing, a nuclear balance between Israel and the major Arab states would have a stabilizing effect. On the Arab side, there would no longer be reason to fear that Israel might be tempted to use its nuclear deterrent for expansionist purposes. On the Israeli side, the present preoccupa-

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tion with secure borders could markedly diminish. On both sides, the will to resort to a military solution of differences would decline and, in time, disappear.*

NUCLEAR power cannot provide a solution to the basic problems which define the Middle East and it would be absurd to suggest otherwise. What nuclear power can provide is an environment in which these problems either must remain unresolved or their resolution sought through means other than war. In a nuclear environment, the Arabs' goals—or rather the goals of pan-Arabism—cannot be fulfilled save at an unbearable cost to those major Arab states who alone can fulfill these goals. Nuclear weapons cannot force the Arab states formally to abandon these goals, just as they cannot force the Arab states to negotiate directly with Israel and thereby to recognize Israel's existence. But a nuclear environment can give these states a very great incentive and justification to move in this direction, however fitfully, and to do so under cover of an Arab version of coexistence. In a word, a nuclear environment can give the major Arab protagonists the way out that so many Western observers assert they dearly want but cannot presently admit.

On the other side, nuclear power can serve in large measure as a substitute for the territorial security that is presently expressed in Israeli policy. A nuclear deterrent would transform Israel's security problem and enable the relinquishment of the occupied territories without the need to insist upon concessions the Arabs will almost surely not make (and will not make during the period in which Israel is the sole Middle East nuclear power). With the decline in significance of "secure borders," not only would the justification for holding on to the territorial buffers be stripped away but also the *security* arguments for opposing the creation of a Palestinian state (the security arguments being the only ones that deserve a hearing). And if there nevertheless remains a justification for insisting upon the demilitarization of a Palestinian state—at least, for an initial period—there is no justification for arrangements, however euphemistically explained, which make such a state a virtual protectorate of Israel. The Israelis, above all, are in no position to extol the benefits of protectorate status for those who do not want these benefits.

IT IS ironic that perhaps the most serious danger attending an Israeli nuclear strategy, apart from the danger of a complete break with America, is so seldom mentioned. A nuclear deterrent would, I have argued here, largely deliver Israel from the dangers it presently faces. But what would prevent Israel, once delivered from these dangers, from pursuing a hawkish policy and employing a nuclear deterrent to freeze the status quo (or, at any rate, all of it save the Sinai)? It is hardly enough to respond that such a policy would be unwise if only because it would leave Israel forever unreconciled with its adversaries while possessed of a large and hostile Arab population that either must be denied the right to participate fully in the political process or, if given the right, might one day be in a position to subvert it. All this is true, but Israel has acted unwisely before and, if left to its own devices, might do so again.

Nor will it do to respond that with Israel delivered from its principal security fears, a hawkish position will no longer carry any persuasiveness, that the argument for a "greater Israel" must appear as little more than an imperialist program, and that, all else failing, a hawkish position will be seen to carry the risk of further conflagration which courts catastrophe for both Israel and Arab countries. It is much too simple to argue that a hawkish position carries appeal only in the present circumstances, just as it is much too simple to argue that the many attractions of holding the West Bank would be warded off by exposing them as imperialism. Without pressure to yield the West Bank and to permit the creation of a Palestinian state we are thrown back on the wisdom and foresight the Israelis might, or again might not, show. And if it is true that a hawkish policy might lead to catastrophe, with a nuclear deterrent the odds are that it would not.

Israel might well be able to pursue a hawkish policy, particularly with respect to the West Bank, if all it needed to fear was the retaliation of its principal protagonists. For they might well be neutralized over the issue of the West Bank through a combination of concessions and threats. If this combination cannot be ruled out even in the present circumstances, it certainly could not be ruled out once Israel were to possess a nuclear deterrent. In a nuclear environment, the Palestinian Arabs would become the most likely losers.

This prospect might be reduced by the United States, since Israel would remain sensitive to American pressures and certainly to the risk of breaking with this country. Ironically, perhaps, it

* It is of course assumed here that the nuclear forces of both sides would be second-strike forces and that the technical nature of the force structures would not be such as to generate a new, and compelling, instability. Many observers are skeptical of the possibilities of developing second-strike forces which are relatively invulnerable to attack and for this reason insist that the introduction of nuclear weapons in the Middle East conflict will have a destabilizing effect. This skepticism overlooks the considerable evolution in weapons and the means of protecting them that has occurred since the 1950's. Missiles may be dispersed and concealed; aircraft may be specially sheltered and protected. Weapons systems may be made mobile, etc. There are all sorts of possibilities for the development of second-strikes forces today. There will be even more in the years ahead. Moreover, stability need not rest on the certainty that nuclear forces will survive a first strike. A substantial probability of survival is quite enough.

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is the United States that could afford a "guarantee" of sorts that justice be done to the Palestinians. This is a far cry from the guarantee I have earlier criticized, though surely one which the present proponents of a guarantee to Israel should prefer, assuming they are as concerned as they profess to be over the fate of the Palestinians.

VII

All conflicts eventually come to an end. In the past they have done so through the irrevocable defeat of one side, the gradual exhaustion of both, the breakup of coalitions, or the intrusion of outside powers. The nuclear age has added still another possibility: the danger of the physical destruction of both sides. It is the latter danger that a nuclearization of the Middle East conflict must raise. In seeking to minimize this danger, the protagonists cannot but alter, and profoundly so, the manner in which they view their conflict.

To say this is not to preclude other, and more traditional, methods of conflict termination (or transformation). The realization that the continuation of a conflict could jeopardize the very existence of the contestants might well provide a significant opening for differences to develop among the partners in the Arab coalition, differences which might otherwise remain suppressed. We are often reminded, and with reason, that Israel faces a coalition, that coalitions do not last forever, and that there are many divisive forces at work within the Arab coalition. All this is true, though it is also true that until now the Arab coalition has demonstrated remarkable staying power. The view that the coalition will break up only when the object which brought it into being has ceased to exist is perhaps excessively pessimistic—though this pessimism seems no more unwarranted than the optimism that for two decades has resulted in periodic frustration.

Given the present circumstances, it is not surprising that speculation has once again turned to the possibility of detaching the principal Arab state from the conflict. The contrast between the rich and the poor in the Arab world daily grows more vivid. Egypt remains among the poor, the desperately poor, yet it has borne the brunt of the conflict with Israel. Why should Egypt not decide to improve its domestic situation, even if by "betraying" the common cause? Egypt's Arab partners hold out little promise of saving it from economic disaster. If such disaster is to be avoided, many argue today, it will only be by turning to more promising sources for assistance—above all, the United States. And if the United States is unwilling or unable to provide assistance of the kind and magnitude Egypt needs, it may yet turn against one of its neighbors to obtain the means for alleviating severe distress. Libya is a likely candidate. Yet the occupation of Libya would both divert Egypt's energies away from the conflict with Israel while placing it in opposition to other Arab states.

These prospects cannot be disregarded. Taken alone, however, they form but modest grounds for optimism over the possibility of the Arab coalition's breaking up. That possibility, if it is to materialize, requires yet another element: the realization that the objective which has formed the coalition's *raison d'être* can no longer be achieved. It is this element that nuclear deterrence can provide.

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The New American Novel

Robert Alter

You may quote me. . . . Man is vile,
and makes nothing worth making,
knows nothing worth knowing.
—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Cat's Cradle.*

ANATHEMATIZATION OF THE WORLD IS NOT AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE WORLD.
—Donald Barthelme, *Snow White*

SOMETHING decidedly peculiar has been happening to the American novel over the past fifteen years. The various labels attached to the new American fiction—black humor, satiric fantasy, anti-realism, self-reflexive writing, fabulation, mythopoeia, absurdism—have by now become the clichés of the weekly newsmagazines, and there is enough congruence among the competing terms at least to reassure us that they point to a common object. Although some attempts have been made to link the writers of the 60's and 70's with the pioneers of European and American modernism of the earlier 20th century, it has been frequently, and justly, observed that the new American novelists break sharply not only with the tradition of realism rooted in the 19th-century novel but also with the modernist ideal of the novel as a perfectly wrought, intricately consistent work of art. That is, in this vehemently contemporary fiction, there is a cultivated quality of rapid improvisation, often a deliberate looseness of form; a love of pastiche, parody, slapdash invention; a wilful neglect of psychological depth and subtlety or consecutiveness of characterization; a cavalier attitude toward consistency of incident, plot unity, details of milieu; and, underlying all these, a kind of despairing skepticism, often tinged either with exhilaration or hysteria, about the validity of language and the very enterprise of fiction.

Now, I would like to propose that we might put this whole cluster of iconoclastic qualities in sharper focus by trying to define the peculiar relation to history that has evolved in recent American fiction. History, it should be remembered, given America's early, compelling dream of itself as a unique new experiment in the evolution of mankind, has tended to exert rather more of a mythic pressure on the novel in this country than has been true in Western Europe. (The eschatological nationalism of the Russian novel would in this respect provide a complementary parallel to the American tradition.) In a good deal of 19th-century American fiction, conditioned as it was by a constantly expanding frontier, there was a sense of unexhausted possibilities constantly opening out from the limitations and vexations of actual American society: Huck Finn's final resolution "to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" is the celebrated archetypal expression of this general sense. Pushed to its theological extreme, this impulse to move into the solitary freedom of God's open country results in a metahistorical pursuit of the Absolute, as in *Moby-Dick.* Seen through the lens of a post-Puritan moral realism, it becomes a disillusioned vision of failed American utopianism, the Territory turned into an empty dream, as in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance.*

The idea held by imaginative writers of an American historical destiny, however troubling or maddening it might be, clearly crossed a decisive watershed in the collective shock of World War I. The helpless involvement of the United States in the destructive processes of world history, and the shattering experience of modern mechanized warfare, made it difficult for serious writers to sustain even the vestiges of our stubborn national innocence. The Hemingway of the 20's responds to the awfulness of the historical moment with an effort to fashion a stoic, perhaps heroic, privatism. Beginning at the end of the 20's, America's one major modernist, William Faulkner, gives the final turn to the old dream of national history by creating out of the experience of the South a myth of American destiny as tragic, irreversible decline, doom devolving from the primal sin by which a national heritage was founded on the enslavement of one race and the dispossession of another.

The novelists who came to prominence in the 40's and early 50's often saw themselves quite consciously as direct heirs of Faulkner or Hemingway, or occasionally others of that same generation. Faulkner's brooding sense of doomed history

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recurs in a variegated array of Southern writers, sometimes lumped together as the Southern Gothics, ranging from the organ-like amplitudes of William Styron's apocalyptic grandiloquence to the poltergeists of Truman Capote. Further to the North, Hemingway's cultivation of a fiercely masculine individualism in the face of the essential nastiness of history would be emulated by a variety of writers of the new generation—perhaps most notably by Norman Mailer, at some moments of his career a hero-worshiper of Hemingway to the point of inadvertent parody.

In any case, what I should like to stress is that the writers who comprised the new generation in the period immediately after World War II faithfully followed the American novel of the 20's and 30's in its effort to engage, through the accumulation of persuasive mimetic detail, historical forces that had come to be seen as potent threats either to the integrity of the individual or to the viability of our collective destiny. On the level of technique, this meant that there tended to be little formal iconoclasm in this group, its prevalent fictional mode being what one still broadly designates as realism—an orientation vividly illustrated in the fiction of the finest writer of this generation, Saul Bellow. Bellow's novels of urban (usually, intellectual) life intelligently trace the minute and manifold impingements of the historical moment and of a specific milieu on the consciousness of an individual who is trying to bring some coherence into his private world, often against the headlong current of the historical moment. Bellow's most recent books, though steeped in the evolving American moods of the 60's and 70's, and more philosophical in temper, remain perfectly consistent with the aims and procedures of his earliest work of the 40's.

Norman Mailer, on the other hand, in his shifting and for the moment truncated career as a novelist, illustrates precisely how American writing has tended to move into a new, problematic relationship with history. His first book, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948)—in many respects still his most adequate novel—draws on techniques of Dos Passos, Farrell, Steinbeck, and other American social realists of the 30's in order to present a panoramic view of American society in the crucible of war, the writer using his medium to grapple strenuously with the complex ideological forces that were exposed in the war, and struggling to imagine some way to a livable human future beyond this or other wars. Mailer's two novels of the 50's, *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, try to explore technical possibilities and human situations beyond the purview of *The Naked and the Dead*, but he remains in both of them an essentially political novelist, keenly attentive to how power is exerted in a particular time and place, how ideology and the moral imagination respond to the felt pressures of power. In Mailer's two novels of the next decade, however, *An American Dream* (1964) and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967), a radical shift occurred, a shift that may explain why Mailer has written no novels since. The very titles, of course, emphasize a programmatic concentration on issues of national destiny, but both novels in fact are largely devoted to the playing out of private fantasies. Frequently articulated with stylistic brilliance, the fantasies do on occasion illuminate certain aspects of the larger American context, but too often their self-indulgence only leads us down some primrose path in Mailer's own teeming mental garden. After such fiction, this abundantly talented writer, losing purchase on both form and subject, seems to have concluded that he had little choice but to become a self-dramatizing journalist.

In the American novelists who began to publish a decade later than Norman Mailer, this elusive and profound relationship between history and private fantasy repeatedly proves to be the key to a whole fictional world. Some traumas by their nature seem to take time to make themselves felt in imaginative work, but from the perspective of the mid-70's it is a little surprising to note how many of the new American novelists of the 60's have been obsessed by the harrowing memory of World War II, even in cases where the writer was too young to have taken part himself. (For the rather old-fashioned sensibility of the young Mailer, by contrast, the war experience was punishing, but hardly traumatic. Indeed, one gathers that he left for the Pacific spoiling to write the Great War Novel, armed with the assumptions and literary methods of the immediately preceding generation of writers.) Joseph Heller's widely influential *Catch-22* (1961), one of the trail-blazing novels in the mode then commonly identified as black humor, offers a paradigm for the whole new movement in fiction: a wildly spinning, zanily farcical vortex of narrative invention turning around a center of unassimilable horror—the violent raw absurdity of death in time of war.

This was the war, after all, that had begun with the literal translation of eschatological belief into a systematic national policy—genocide—and that ended, on the other side, with the use of new instruments of destruction capable of obliterating human life on our planet. This war pregnant with the end of all things is the consuming subject of both of Thomas Pynchon's major novels, *V.* (1963) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and it equally haunts most of the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Of the commonly acclaimed new American novelists, only John Barth has not reverted directly to the war, though his work has patently been produced in the psychological aftermath of the war, something symptomatically suggested in his first novel, *The Floating Opera* (1955), where a traumatic memory of a dead man in a trench—it is "displaced" into World War I—functions exactly like *Catch-22*'s hole of horror at the center of the fictional vortex.

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If much of this fiction has been obsessed with the war and the terrible revelation of the nature of history embodied in the war, the writers, following the general logic of obsessions, have addressed themselves more to the materials of recurrent fantasy than to their ostensibly objective referents. What I am suggesting is that these novelists even (or perhaps especially) when their surface details are most insistently historical, have been concerned with something very different from history. Indeed, one frequently finds their adversary impulse toward contemporary reality accompanied by a predisposition to dismiss it impatiently, not to bother with imagining it in any complex way. This quality was shrewdly observed a number of years ago by Burton Feldman in a trenchant critique of black humor (*Dissent*, March-April 1968): "For all the violence of its assault on American culture, Black Humor gives no sense that this enemy is worth attacking. It is only there, a middle-class moonscape; and then Black Humor slips off into fantasy and parody."

Middle-class moonscape is an apt description of the America evoked in the fiction of Kurt Vonnegut, where outraged social criticism, sentimental moralism, and science-fiction fantasy form a piquant if not altogether credible *ménage à trois*. The case of Vonnegut is an instructive one because the comic-strip clarity of his novels lucidly illustrates a conception of history largely shared by Pynchon and Barth, though perhaps partly camouflaged through the complicated elaboration of design in their more ambitious work. Vonnegut has obviously been the most widely read of the new novelists because his stylistic, structural, and psychological simplicity, coupled with a genuine verve of narrative inventiveness, makes him the most easily accessible of these writers. I would attribute at least some of his popularity, however, to the need of many readers over the past decade for a novelist who could write away history while seeming to write about it.

Vonnegut clearly has the greatest personal claim to the experience of radical trauma in the war, having been a prisoner of the Germans in Dresden at the time when all of the city's structures and a large part of its population were incinerated in a massive American firebombing. That particular experience is at the center of one novel, *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), but its presence is implicit in most of what Vonnegut has written. The conclusions Vonnegut draws from this ghastly memory are worth summarizing because they embody, at the lower limits of complexity, attitudes of a whole literary generation.

Most pressingly, the novels articulate an uncompromising cynicism about politics, about all forms of nationalism, all collective endeavor, about the potential for destructive evil in even the most seemingly innocent and private of men. As a character in *Cat's Cradle* (1963) is made to say, "Man is vile, and makes nothing worth making, knows nothing worth knowing." The individual, especially if he is in any way an artist, is bound to be misrepresented, violated, viciously exploited, by the sinister powers that govern collective existence. (One might recall that Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* makes paranoia a central formal theme, repeatedly invoking a ubiquitous Them—the capital T is the author's—out to get the hapless individual.) Characteristically, the writer-protagonist of Vonnegut's *Mother Night* (1961), caught in a cross-pull of the devious political operations of Nazi propaganda, American and Russian intelligence, says he feels like a pig taken apart by the experts, who have managed to find a use even for his squeal: "The part of me that wanted to tell the truth got turned into a liar! The lover in me got turned into a pornographer! The artist in me got turned into ugliness such as the world has rarely seen before." In the face of such an assault, the novelist can only adopt a series of strategies of self-protective flippancy and cheerfully apocalyptic pessimism, converting the novel into an extended evasive action taken against Them, the powers that would rape—or as we unfortunately say in America these days, "co-opt"—the artist or any individual trying to guard his own fragile and private truth.

It will be observed that there is a Manichean split here between the unalterable forces of boundless evil and the residual nostalgia for goodness, truth, and love in some individuals (hence the sentimentality beneath the cynicism in Vonnegut). Such dualism in itself implies an avoidance of real history, which presents itself as a highly variegated set of mixed moral phenomena, not as a simple split between good individuals and evil collectivities. What is still more revealing, however, in regard to the dehistoricization of history in Vonnegut is the absolute equality he requires of horrors perpetrated on all sides. Man, at least in his political guise, is equally vile everywhere, whether he is a Nazi, an American, or a Soviet Russian, and so Dresden and Hiroshima are, quite without qualification, the exact equivalent of Auschwitz and Dachau. Taking the symmetricization of history even one step further, Vonnegut implies that all these loci of horror mean no more or less on the moral scale than the thoughtlessness with which an absent-minded scientist (in *Cat's Cradle*) idly invents a doomsday weapon that subsequently destroys all life on earth.

Actual history is above all the realm of constant, nuanced, endlessly perplexing differentiation, but in Vonnegut and other American novelists of the 60's and 70's, we find the following simple chain of equations: all history is mindlessly destructive, all destructiveness is impelled by the same underlying forces or motives, and can be reduced to the same basic formula, and so all engagements in a particular historical cause are equally lunatic and futile. A comment made by a character in Donald

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Barthelme's *Snow White* (1967) beautifully illustrates this whole leveling approach to history as well as the characteristic literary manner it engenders in Vonnegut, in Barthelme himself, and in a good many of their American contemporaries:

> If I had been born well prior to 1900, I could have ridden with Pershing against Pancho Villa. Alternatively, I could have ridden with Villa against the landowners and corrupt government officials of the time. In either case, I would have had a horse. How little opportunity there is for young men to have personally-owned horses in the bottom half of the 20th century! A wonder that we U.S. youth can fork a saddle at all.

Barthelme is a shrewd writer if ultimately a trivial one, and it is clever of him to choose a relatively peripheral historical conflict in order to show how all sides are interchangeable, each having its own spurious myths (the American patriot's hero-worshipping "I could have ridden with Pershing") and its own clichés (the revolutionary slogan of a struggle against "landowners and corrupt government officials"). Equally characteristic of the new American writing is the way this total disillusionment with the supposed "complexities" of history turns directly into verbal clowning: two opposed alternatives of participation in a Mexican revolution suddenly switch into a farcical tangent, expressed in mock-serious language, about the lack of "personally-owned horses" and how it has afflicted "U.S. youth." The technique ostentatiously destroys distinctions between what is central and what is peripheral in human experience. The course of history itself is seen not as a weighty, momentous development in experienced time, but as an abstract scheme of contentless dates, perhaps a diagram in a notebook, "the bottom half of the 20th century" from which the speaker peers up at the mechanically interchangeable figures of Pershing and Pancho Villa somewhere near the top. Such a sense of history as symmetrically indifferent pointlessness is shared by others of the new American novelists, but Barthelme may well infer the most consistent artistic consequence of this sense by openly withdrawing from the serious representation of men and women caught in the web of history to a mimicry of verbal and cultural gestures, the fiction devised chiefly as a collage of linguistic waste products, a study of what the author himself calls "the trash phenomenon" in language.

THE dehistoricizing of history—the absence of a sense that history provides mixed possibilities for achievement and change, as well as repeated occasions for disaster—largely explains, I think, the final effect of hollowness or slightness in even those works of recent American fiction which have assumed massive proportions and aspired to encyclopedic statements about technological civilization in the 20th century. I have in mind those fictional blockbusters that are periodically celebrated on the predictable front page of the New York *Times Book Review* as the greatest achievement in American writing since Melville, or in modern writing since Joyce. (One does not want to be too cynical about such things, but it is well to bear in mind that there are powerful American establishments in book publishing, journalism, and literary academia that have vested interests in discovering an unquestionable new masterpiece at the rate, say, of one every eighteen months.) The two most conspicuous novels of this sort since the mid-60's are Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) and, seven years afterward, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. In both, the proliferation of historical and pseudo-historical detail runs roughly in inverse proportion to any truly historical grasp of events. Taken together, they demarcate the upper and lower ranges of attempts to write a Great American Novel with historical conflict seen as a matter of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Pynchon's descriptive brilliance and architectonic inventiveness are such that one sometimes forgets the simplicity of the formula on which he builds his 900-page structure. In Barth, on the other hand, the endless complication of surface details is of so brittle a cleverness that it constantly reveals the tediousness of the novel's informing conception.

Giles Goat-Boy is little more than an immensely inflated translation game, the world conceived as a university, its sacred texts as syllabi, the cold war as a rivalry between East Campus and West Campus, each equipped with an all-powerful computer capable of shortcircuiting the entire academic realm. Thus the Jewish mentor of the novel's Archetypal Hero—for Joseph Campbell and other handbooks of Jungian anthropology have been schematically superimposed on the schematic translation game—solemnly informs Giles: "Moishe says in the Old Syllabus, *Except ye be circumcised like me, ye shall not Pass.* But in the New Syllabus Enos Enoch says *Verily, I crave the foreskin of the mind.*" Here in capsule is the problem of the novel as a whole: it is hard to see what is gained by translating Old and New Testaments into Old Syllabus and New, in thinly disguising Moses and Jesus as Moishe and Enos Enoch (for the latter see Genesis 5:24), in substituting academic passing for theological salvation. The transparent coding activity at best affords the sorts of mental gratification that might appeal to a reasonably alert high-school sophomore while, on the negative side, it allows for a relentlessly simplistic reduction of historical facts—in this particular case the facts of religious history. The broader cold-war plan of the novel can be manipulated, through the mechanical logic of the translation game, as a perfectly symmetrical interplay of forces, the complex and changing conflict of interests between two large political systems since 1945 reduced to East Campus and West; to two acronymic computers, EASCAC and WESCAC; to Slavic Tweedledumsky

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and American Tweedledeeman. The simplicity of pseudo-historical conception is at bottom the same as Vonnegut's flat equation of Dresden with Auschwitz, but without Vonnegut's engaging simplicity of manner.

As *Giles Goat-Boy* slowly recedes into the detritus of failed experiments in American fiction, the one real question it raises is why it should have been initially received by so many critics, especially in the more popular reviewing media, with such extravagant enthusiasm. In addition to the general thirst for greatness in the American novel to which I have alluded (with a concomitant tendency to confuse greatness with bigness), literary circles in this country are inclined, in a period which has placed special value on the anti-conventional, the oppositional, to mistake mere verbal vaudeville for stylistic vitality, grotesquerie for originality, callow cynicism—as in the *de rigueur* scenes of orgiastic abandon cerebrally conceived—for probing moral vision. In all these features, Barth's most ambitious book represents the typical characteristics of the new American novel at their puerile worst. His more modest concentration on ironized myth and on the exhaustion of narrative possibilities in his two volumes of fiction since *Giles* suggests that without the ability to engage imaginatively the dynamic complexities of real historical process, the novel, like the morally paralyzed hero of Barth's second book, *The End of the Road,* has no place to go.

GRAVITY'S RAINBOW, at least at first glance, reveals many of the same generic features as *Giles Goat-Boy*. It, too, presents an enormously ramified fictional structure meant to give an encyclopedic account of the relentless destructiveness of history in our era. Here, too, the menace of apocalypse is conveyed with a kind of savage hilarity, the characters purposely reduced to grotesquely named cartoons, verbal slapstick abounding, bizarre and lurid fantasies spinning out of historical centers, orgiastic scrambles and endlessly deviant sexual couplings deployed to incarnate the perverseness and the cynical exhaustion of the human spirit. The general effect of *Gravity's Rainbow,* however, is quite different from that of Barth's book, this novel being alternately repellent and engrossing, intolerably tedious and illuminating, but not finally trivial.

Pynchon's setting is the European theater during the final months of World War II and the immediately subsequent period of the Occupation. His constant focus is the V-2 rocket, which is seen as a mystical icon, as a sexual symbol, and, above all, as the towering, mesmerizing vehicle of apocalypse which is the logical end-product of industrial civilization. The whole scheme is elaborated with a formidable degree of intellectual complexity. Pynchon is fundamentally a philosophic writer—at times, one suspects, too inexorably philosophic for the formal needs of the novel—and he uses his looming Rocket to explore basic questions of probability and determinism, entropy and order, randomness and paranoid system, in intricate detail. Possessing an extraordinarily well-stocked mind, he is able to put to active use as much precisely observed lore—from science, history, and popular culture—as any living writer in English.

Indeed, *Gravity's Rainbow* often seems only residually narrative, less a novel than an "anatomy," one of those eccentric baroque compendia of bizarre associative learning like Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643). Pynchon is a brilliant stylist with a love for mimetic detail (though the overall conception of the book is schematic and mythic rather than mimetic), and this novel is studded with impressive set-pieces, from the evocation of a dozen generations of a family in a New England graveyard near the beginning to the great lyric description of the ultimate flight of the rocket at the very end. Most appropriately for a novel in which the central symbol is a complex instrument of technology, the writer is able to shape the imagery and conceptual materials of science and technology into vital elements of his style. To cite one of hundreds of examples, this is the way he defines a mood of edginess between two lovers: "They're both of them peevish tonight, whippy as sheets of glass improperly annealed, ready to go smash at any indefinite touch in a whining matrix of stresses."

For all these indubitable resources, *Gravity's Rainbow* is a novel that satisfies one unevenly in segments rather than as a whole. The problem is not that it lacks structural unity. On the contrary, Pynchon is the most artfully designing of the new American novelists, and the seemingly disparate pieces of his novel are interwoven with an elaborate tracery of verbal, imagistic, folkloric, theosophic, pop-culture, and scientific motifs. The difficulty is rather in Pynchon's schematic conception of the movement of history which is his subject. I would argue, in fact, that he closely resembles Barth, Barthelme, and Vonnegut in finally not taking history very seriously, despite the overwhelming density of actual historical detail in the book. Perhaps the best way to see this is in his notion of a conspiracy of international capital, which is in many respects his most compelling historical argument.

Pynchon can be persuasively disturbing in his evocation of a ubiquitous profit-motive that works through international cartels, manipulating wars and producing death as its logical end-product: "Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. . . . The true war is a celebration of markets." Such statements have a certain aphoristic resonance, though they seriously misrepresent the character of a war in which the fundamental motives were ideological, not economic. The ingenuity of Pynchon's method is sometimes pointedly suggestive in making it

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difficult for us to distinguish between historical fact and fictional invention. There actually were, of course, connections in the 30's between I.G. Farben and duPont, as he repeatedly and effectively reminds us. On the other hand, when an I.G. Farben executive in the novel angrily rejects the proposal to develop a ray capable of blinding everyone for a radius of miles—because after the war there would be fewer customers for the company's dyes—fictional invention is used to expose the inner logic of historical facts, teasingly leaving us to wonder whether it might actually be historical fact. By the time we are well into the novel, however, the idea of international capital produces visions like this:

> *A Rocket-cartel.* A structure cutting across every agency human and paper that ever touched it. Even to Russia. . . . Are there arrangements Stalin won't admit . . . doesn't even *know about?* Oh, a State begins to take form in the stateless German night, a State that spans oceans and surface politics, sovereign as the International or the Church of Rome, and the Rocket is its soul. I G Raketen.

This, of course, is not history but paranoid fantasy using historical materials—or eschatological symbolism drawn out of history, which amounts to the same thing—and I don't think Pynchon himself really escapes the schematic simplicity of the paranoid vision merely by naming paranoia repeatedly as an explicit theme and attributing it to his principal characters.

History as seen here through the experience of World War II is a process of pure destructiveness, posing for the frail individual's futile hopes of survival only the question of whether the acts of destruction are patterned or random. Thus the narrator wonders how a mathematician, charting the statistical curve of German rocketfall on London, can "be so at his ease with these symbols of randomness and fright? Innocent as a child, perhaps unaware—perhaps—that in this play he wrecks the elegant rooms of history, threatens the idea of cause and effect itself. . . . Will Postwar be nothing but 'events,' newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?" Again, Pynchon, the most intelligent of the new American writers, keenly perceives the problematics of the concepts with which he is working but is nevertheless trapped by them as a novelist. If the end of history is at hand, historical time being only a welter of statistical events, without causal links, all bent on destruction, there is no objective ground for narrative structure; calculated formal design must substitute for anything like development in the novel; and perhaps most crucial, there are no criteria for *selectivity* in the novelist's shuttle between history and invention.

Let me briefly elaborate this last point because I think it may explain how *Gravity's Rainbow* can be at the same time a complex architectonic structure and a lamentably flabby novel. If history is no longer a realm of concatenation, if there are no necessary connections among discrete events and no possibility of a hierarchy of materials ranged along some scale of significance, any associative chain of fantasies, any crotchety hobbyistic interest, any technical fascination with the rendering of odd trivia, can be pursued by the novelist as legitimately as the movement of supposedly "significant" actions. The end of history, in other words, is a writer's license for self-indulgence, and Pynchon utilizes that license for page after dreary page of *Gravity's Rainbow* as he describes at incredible length varieties of turds in a sewer, varieties of revolting wine-jelly candies in a British cupboard, varieties of bizarre sexual combinations in a very long daisy-chain, and so forth.

The lack of selectivity leads to local flaws; the unwillingness to make differential judgments about historical events results in a larger inadequacy of the novel as a whole. A very high-level Vonnegut, Pynchon presents a perfectly symmetrical picture of devotion to the technology of death during the Hitler era (and, implicitly, since) in Germany, England, America, and Russia. Whatever the surface differences, the same isomorphic forces are imagined impelling all nations. One would never guess from this novel, for example, that there were after all significant differences between a totalitarianism unsurpassed in its ruthlessness and political systems that had some institutional guarantees of individual freedoms, or between a state that was dedicated to fulfillment through genocide and one that was not. It is precisely for this reason that Pynchon's Europe of 1944-45 seems so much like a "moonscape," despite all the seemingly documentary detail.

Such leveling of historical distinctions is disastrously encouraged by the post-Freudian cliché through which Pynchon sees all events and around which he elaborates his central symbol. The Rocket is, of course, a monstrous phallus, Eros turned to Thanatos, the Death Instinct having absorbed all mankind's libidinal energy. The point, insisted on over and over, is made perfectly explicit near the end. An interpolated voice, commenting on the protagonist, says that Dr. Jamf, the sinister German scientist who had loomed behind the action, "was only a fiction, to help him [Slothrop, the protagonist] explain what he felt so terribly, so immediately in his genitals for those rockets each time exploding in the sky . . . to help him deny what he could not possibly admit: that he might be in love, in sexual love, with his, and his race's, death." Virtually all the ingenious contrivances of plot and character in *Gravity's Rainbow* are finally illustrations of this single idea. History reduced so exclusively to the working out of the Death Instinct is metapsychological myth, no history at all, and what it generates in the novel is a proliferation of variations on one unswerving

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formula that in the end tells us nothing new about the challengingly ambiguous interplay of people and power in real historical time.

The encouragement given by critics to this sort of facilely schematic cynicism about history suggests that we may be in for a good deal more of it. To cite a very recent example, E.L. Doctorow's bestseller, *Ragtime,** set in the Teddy Roosevelt era, weaves together fictional invention with a tendentious selection of facts about actual historical figures and events in order to give the impression that the most basic impulse of American life at the time was realized in lynching, gunning down of strikers, slow starvation of immigrants, and the like, all ultimately presided over by a Mephistophelean J.P. Morgan. (The Morgan enterprises here are an exact equivalent of Pynchon's I.G. Farben.) The middlebrow reviewers, while celebrating Doctorow's "boldness" and "originality," did not see fit to observe that his version of American history is one that could easily fit into a handbook for urban guerrillas. The novelists' leveling approach to history in fact now seems often replicated in literary criticism. Thus, Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory,*† an otherwise workmanlike documentation of the literary impact of World War I on Englishmen, is utterly unconvincing in its repeated insistence that Heller, Pynchon, the later Mailer, all of Vonnegut, respond to more recent conflicts in essentially the imaginative mode developed in the experience of 1914-18. Not surprisingly, the sweeping archetypal notions of Northrop Frye are enlisted to facilitate this critical schematization of literary history.

Now, the whole line of argument I have been advancing here may give the impression that the only legitimate novel in my view is an old-fashioned realistic one, and that I have found these particular novelists wanting chiefly for their failure to treat history in the manner of Zola or Arnold Bennett. I should like to stress that I have no quarrel at all with fantasy or flaunted artifice in the novel but only with their deployment in ways that are ultimately self-indulgent and mechanically repetitious, that tend to turn the imaginative energies of fiction into a crackling closed circuit. Let me offer one brief counter-example to indicate how a novel written in a manifestly antirealist mode can still put us in touch with the nature of real forces at work in history. The book I have in mind is Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), a novel that could well be the finest that has appeared in English since the beginning of the 60's. The celebrated intricacy of artifice in *Pale Fire* has been the subject of much solemn explication (including some of my own), but what saves the evident "brilliance" of the book from mere cleverness is that it illuminates the deeper perplexities of art operating in history in a way the novels we have been considering do not.

At first thought, any serious connection with real history would seem quite implausible in this novel where all political events are the fantasies of a madman recessed within the structure of a poem by a fictitious poet. Kinbote, the narrator, one recalls, while supposedly editing and annotating the last work of a recently deceased American poet, John Shade, spins out a fantasy of himself as the dethroned monarch of a certain vaguely northern European kingdom called Zembla, taken over by a ruthless revolutionary party, the Extremists, who have sent an obtuse but implacable assassin in pursuit of the former king. All this delusional material is presented in one of the most elaborately patterned novels of recent decades, the narrative being a complex interweave of recurring images, colors, anagrammatic clues, and literary allusions. The political "reality" of Zembla, moreover, is ostentatiously of a comic-opera variety, abounding in secret doors, underground passages, midnight escapes, and other predictable paraphernalia. (The narrator at the end actually contemplates remaking the story as a swashbuckling movie to be called *Escape from Zembla.*)

Nevertheless, *Pale Fire* succeeds in creating an evocative sense of history as a scary but compelling arena in which different options for human enhancement or disfigurement, different levels of consciousness, are generated by shifting events and political systems, by the varying circumstances of individual and national culture. Nabokov keenly understands that there are, after all, qualitative differences between living in a totalitarian state, where the perfect ideal of man is to be, like the assassin Gradus in the novel, an obedient goon with a gun, and living under political systems where there is enough freedom of consciousness for the poet, the lover, the madman (Shade and Kinbote between them are all three) to enjoy immense riches of inner experience even in the painful comedy and the bizarre contradictions of their wayward mental life. The fact that all the central events of the novel are patent inventions has the paradoxical effect of sharpening this ultimately political theme.

Pale Fire, in a weirdly refracted fashion, is a piece of searching spiritual autobiography for Nabokov, who has felt himself so acutely to be a displaced poet victimized by the violent upheavals of 20th-century history, forced first to flee Bolshevik terror in his native Russia, then Nazi terror in Germany and afterward in France. Nabokov's own father was gunned down by "Russian fascists" (his term) in Berlin in 1922; later his brother died in a Nazi concentration camp. *Pale Fire*'s absorbing fantasy of assassination, then, is devised to articulate a desperately serious political concern that has haunted the writer for most of his adult

* Random House, 270 pp., $8.95.
† Oxford University Press, 363 pp., $13.95.

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life: what validity beyond mere escapism does art possess, seemingly so fragile, futile, and finally impotent in the face of murderous history; and, conversely, what is the inner nature of the politics that systematically subverts and destroys every important value enhanced or fulfilled by art? The self-conscious fictional prism of *Pale Fire* manages to focus a vivid sense of history in which man is not universally vile but both abysmally vile and mysteriously splendid (Kinbote, the mad poet-commentator, is in his own odd way both), and so the fiction finally leads us, as the novels of Barth, Pynchon, and company do not, to ponder what it is about the varieties of historical experience that makes possible such contradictory extremes of destructiveness and creation.

THE recurrent difficulties among the newer American novelists in establishing an imaginative connection of this or any other kind with history may well reflect more general problems of American national consciousness since the early 1960's, but that is beyond the scope of the present discussion. The abundance of inventive energy manifested in the recent American novel surely warrants the careful critical attention of anyone interested in new possibilities for imaginative prose. A comparison, however, with novelists who have come to prominence elsewhere during the past ten years—like Argentina's Manuel Puig, Colombia's Gabriel García Márquez, Israel's Amos Oz—suggests that there are still viable fictional means, both realistic and fantastic, for tracing the pressures of history on individual lives, or the large forces at work in history, even from our disaster-skewed perspective "in the bottom half of the 20th century." Lacking the dangerously tentative medium of history, the voices that address us from the American novel may be sharp and arresting but will continue to speak with a shrill finality that often seems the author's, not the world's.

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Therefore Choose Life

Joseph R. Levenson

I

ALMOST everybody who is interested in Jews at all sometimes asks the question, "Are Jews a people or a sect?" Is Judaism an identity masquerading as a religion—a national identity ("the Hebrews") or a cultural identity ("Jewishness")? Valid Judaism invalidates the question. Judaism, a religion, is embodied in nation and culture. These are intrinsic and essential. In the medium is the message. Judaism has an almost Confucian feeling for the "oneness of knowledge and action."

Many people call Judaism a religion, but a "lower religion," ethnocentric and tribal. At best they see it as abortively universal, missing out on its own implications, which were yielded to the Church. Ezra Pound, putting it at the worst, gives the Hebrew Bible the same standing as tales of the Choctaw. Many observers, though milder than Pound, agree that Jews may travel but Judaism doesn't: for all the fact of Gentile conversions to Judaism, in Hellenistic times and after, Judaism still looks like just a derivative of "the religion of the Semites," part of a larger cultural repertoire. The religion is anthropologically interesting, not the other way around—the anthropology, or the community anthropologized, is not religiously interesting. How should it be, if the religion is just a department of a single people's (though a complex people's) life? What is this people's kinship structure, what are its taboos . . . ?

If Judaism is just cultural baggage, cultures, as everyone knows, change, and never so fast as in modern times. Modern liberal values, in fact say that cultures *ought* to change. A rationalistic ethic proclaims freedom, release from the authority of tradition. Certain traditions may appeal to modern taste—the very idea of tradition may appeal—but then taste, not tradition, has authority. A credo (runs the liberal imperative) should not be imposed by birth. The liberal imperative is Kant's: so act—and, by implication, so believe—that you can conceive your governing principle as a universal principle. This has seemed subversive of Judaism. Kant thought so, and so have many Jews, for Judaism seems hopelessly particular.

Some Jews may resent being identified as Jews, identified with a cultic commitment they never made. If they happen to agree, for example, with historically Jewish demurrals about cardinal points of Christian doctrine, shouldn't they be able to make it clear that it is *they* who demur? Unitarianism or Ethical Culture or disaffiliation ("religion: none") would be their proper platform. This, presumably, universalizes their doctrine, making them free and respectable intellectually. Many Jewish parents, not out of sloth or unconcern, but in all conscience, object to any Jewish education for their children. Let them grow up, become intellectually responsible, and then decide. What do these parents imply?—that it is biased, unfair, to foist on children a pre-rational, a particularistic, association. Must they be children of Israel?

Of course one could make debating points against this point of view. No one reaches maturity with a *tabula rasa* mind, antiseptically rational; and so bias (in this case, anti-Jewish bias) may be assured, not removed, by an early parental default. But it is the ground of the debate, not one of the sides, that has to be challenged. For Judaism as an abstract, intellectual, universal proposition—indeed, a subject for modern choice or rejection—subsumes under itself concrete, nonintellectual, particular *existence*, a people, a historical quantity. General truth-seekers, Jews among them, ask why Jews have to remain visible. What has this to do with rational acceptance of whatever spiritual quality a religion may possess? The answer—a tautology—is that Jews are a people that has to remain visible. It is not just that history made them visible (and may yet close over them). They are not just a people available for anthropologizing, religion and all. They live as a people that has to live: and that is their definition. Of course their values are facts, their norms can be described. But the descriptions pertain to prescriptions. To be is not to be, but to will to be—and to be willed. Thou (not "one"), thou (so there are others), thou shalt have (not thou wilt have) no other god before Me.

A Jew always reaffirms that his people, from which he is not separate himself, must stay visible, historically surviving in all its generations. This

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JOSEPH R. LEVENSON, the well-known authority on Chinese history, was, until his death in 1969, Sather Professor of history at Berkeley. Among his books are *Confucian China and its Modern Fate, Revolution and Cosmopolitanism,* and *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China.* The present essay, discovered in draft form among his papers after his death, was intended to be the first chapter of a work on Judaism. A somewhat different version of it will appear in a memorial volume, *The Mozartian Historian: Essays on the Works of Joseph R. Levenson,* edited by Maurice Meisner and Rhoads Murphey, to be published next spring by the University of California Press.

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is a religious position, not a social preference. A taste for "cultural pluralism" has nothing to do with it; not defeatism about anti-Semitism, nor even a sense of honor in the face of anti-Semitism; nor vicarious thrills in chess championships or the special and general theories of relativity. In spite of the Nazi experience, maybe partly because of it, the assumptions most Jews make today, their hopes or fears, are plausible. One can get lost in America or England, even in Russia, quite easily. Cultural eclecticism, a general modern trend, lets anyone get anyone's "ethnic" foods at the market, anyone (exit Russia here, if not before) hear Israeli folksongs in his favorite *boîte,* anyone read the Bible as "living literature," or even as spiritual refreshment. Brave people in Mississippi can try to do justice and love mercy without reading Micah, or without reading him as Jews, or with only a passing pleasure but no stab of command at finding lofty thoughts in a book of Jewish provenance. One can read Confucius and nod one's head (for a number of reasons) at his sage dicta, without being Chinese. Who needs to be a Jew in order to have some Jewish spices in the cosmopolitan recipe?

A Jew needs to be a Jew—Judaism is compelling—for reasons other than Jewish "contributions" to civilization. That is a futile defense, anyway, against Jewish dissolution; simply as an eclectic modern, a Jew could take, or make, these contributions. But more seriously, the trouble is that men who "place" Judaism in this fashion, as just an early contributor to our catholic modern culture, have missed the meaning of Jewish experience. For Judaism is not a drop dissolved in a synthesis, not a spice of life, a motif in history. It is a choice of life. History is a motif in Judaism, and the latter's very particularism—such a scandal to so many open minds with large views, impatient with closed communities and petty selves—does not, in fact, constitute parochialism, but converts it. The Jewish people, by its very existence, and only in its existence, its historical visibility, states a general proposition. Judaism does not fall short of the "truth" of universalism. It stands against that spurious universalism which is so often invoked against it.

II

DEUTERONOMY 4, 15-20:

And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves . . . lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them, and serve them which the Lord thy God hath allotted unto all the peoples under the whole heaven. But you hath the Lord taken and brought forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

Here is the God of nature and the God of history, one God, with two realms of creation. Nature is universal ("allotted unto all the peoples"). It is not to be worshipped. History is the particular. Non-biblical thinkers like Aristotle (setting poetry as the realm of eternity against history as the realm of ephemera) and anti-biblical thinkers like Voltaire (setting essentialist, all-pervading deism against the accidental, petty history of Jewish revelation) confirm it. And history is essential to the Jews.

Not that God gave history only to Jews. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O Children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?" (from Amos, in one of the weekly chantings from the Prophets and Writings in the cycle of the Jewish year). Rather, Jews see man's relation to God—until the days of the Messiah—in history, in particularity. Jewish particularity stems from a positive definition of a vessel of meaningful life. It does not have—as the exclusiveness of the "white race" does have—the spuriousness, the lack of inner self-existence, of mere negation.

The Sabbath, after the sixth day, when "the Heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host," commemorates the creation of universal nature. It also commemorates the creation of particular history—creation of the Jews as a people, a vessel of history, ready to start out from slavery as an inchoate mass in the "iron furnace," on to the commitment at Sinai, and on and on to the brink of the land of promise, where the scroll of the Torah ends. This is The Land, *Eretz,* the small earthy plot that confirms the creation of a people by rooting them in a finite patch of soil. The Sabbath *Kiddush,* the sanctification on the eve, the ceremony that recalls the creation of the world, also calls the Sabbath "a memorial to the departure from Egypt." Nature and history, the universal and the particular, are brought together.

If God is one, nature and history *must* be brought together. Nature without history invites cyclical thinking, no sense of process but the cycle, in magical sympathy with the cycle of the seasons, with no "in the beginning." And this means no sense of individuation: one seeks accommodation with nature (involving a mystical loss of self-consciousness), harmony, not creative change. To deny this is to deny the importance of God as creator ("in the beginning," with a straight extension of time), and the importance of the related Jewish injunction to *imitatio Dei.* God starts history. Jews make history.

When Israel hears, or is commanded to hear, that the Lord their God is One, this historical people must accept the combination of nature and history as the issue of one Creator. History is not meant to deny nature, but it must not be denied itself. Cycles figure in Jewish thinking, the

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cycle of ritual observances and the cycle of reading the Torah, so that the death of Moses and the creation of heaven and earth meet in sequence at Simchat Torah, the festival of rejoicing in the Law. And throughout the year, historical and natural events combine to inform the festivals, such as the Feast of Weeks—Shavuot—relating to the epiphany at Sinai and the gathering of the sheaves. But in each of the basic holiday seasons, Passover and the High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah-Yom Kippur), there is a careful disjunction of nature and history. Not a denial of one or the other, but a singleness of emphasis.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish "New Year," the special celebration of the creation of the world, falls in the seventh month, not on the natural new year. The transcendental creation of nature (linked with the Jews' reaffirmations of their ethical imperatives, their commitments to act, as the act of creation suggests) is deliberately separated from involvement in the cyclical renewal of nature. Nissan, the first month of the natural year, in the spring, is the month that is marked for Exodus, the historically Jewish, not the natural or universal, point of departure. The spring-festival character of Passover is overlaid with history. When it gets down to commemorating the two realms of creation, Jewish practice links them in the Sabbath, but preserves a creative tension by keeping them individual in the year, so that the particular is not just subsumed, swallowed, in the universal. Until history ends, history must be savored and respected, newly fashioned in action, in memory of the Creation.

III

"THERE shall be neither Jews nor Greeks." How does a Jewish sense of history, a transcendentalist conception, relate to a Greek universalism, with its immanentist character? Usually, in the conventional comparison of "Hellenism" and "Hebraism," Christianity is filed under Hebraism, with all the appropriate clichés—somber, brooding, and so on, as against the life-enchancing Greek light.

Many scholars, like Moses Hadas in *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (1959), have taken the starkness out of this confrontation. Hellenic light, they show, was not dimmed by the dark from the East in some Manichean struggle. Rather a Hellenistic fusion, a mingling of colors (powerfully furthered by the conquests of Alexander), created an ecumenical culture; the Hellenistic age gave later Europe the configuration of its culture. In Hadas's synthesis, Isocrates emerges as the great spokesman for the diffusion of Hellenism from the Greek center, and Plato as the thinker most influential in the areas of diffusion. And Hadas sees the process affirmatively, as making the Europe we know, not negatively, as breaking the classic ideal.

It is the Jewish experience with Hellenism which provides the most complex test of the latter's quality, and of Judaism's too.

"Hellenic" as a term pertains to a specific historical people—the Greeks; the "Hellenistic," on the other hand, transnational and universalist, does not require Greeks to embody it. But Judaism requires Jews, a requirement of particularity which has exasperated universalists both ancient and modern, Boris Pasternak no less than the Emperor Hadrian. Hadas notes this requirement, as he juxtaposes Plutarch with the talmudist, Yohanan ben Zakkai. For both, he suggests, a way of life was made into a cult which could command loyalty even when sovereignty was lost—but "the great difference was that whereas Plutarch's was only metaphorically a cult, Yohanan's was one in fact." That is, the Jews gained continuity as a community; the Greeks continued in their intellectual legacy, informing a civilization that followed and transcended the Greek.

Yet, while Hadas keeps this distinction very much in mind, his book suggests that Jewish history is rescued from meaninglessness by its disembodied intellectual influence on the central stream of political theory which Rome transmitted to Europe (from Isaiah through the Sybilline Oracles, Vergil, and the Roman imperial ideology), on basic Christianity (from the Septuagint through the Apocrypha), on scholastic theology (from the Bible through Posidonius of Apamea to Seneca and, ultimately, Aquinas), etc. Just as the Hellenic can become Hellenistic and, by being encapsulated in a universal history, leave the Greeks behind, so the Jewish can be encapsulated in the Hellenistic, the Christian, the European, and by shaking off the material body, claim a triumph of the spirit or the soul.

However, the ultimate Jewish dissociation from Hellenism was a calculated rejection of just such a typically Hellenistic dichotomy of matter and spirit. Hadas observes that the Jews' willing subjection to the law was the means of their survival after territory and sovereignty were lost. But the law cannot be vindicated that way, as a means, to those who would devalue the end, ethnic survival, according to Hellenistic or Christian criteria. What needs to be seen is that the Jewish will to survival was a religious will, a reaffirmation of the biblical injunction to "choose life," an acceptance of history and the consequent commitment to action, and thus a rejection of Platonic and neo-Platonic indifference to history and of antinomian (because anti-historical) Pauline otherworldliness.

Whatever Hellenistic, post-biblical elements may be found in rabbinical Judaism, it still kept "the world, universe" and "eternity" together in the Hebrew word *"olam,"* not rent apart in Hellenistic fission. The decision to stay in the world and continue a history was not only a sociological act of resistance to the Hellenistic solvent but an intellectual denial of what that would imply. And the denial was contained in the act. Or, the thought demanded the survival of the thinker, as a judgment on a universalism so ethereal that

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bodies, lives, the material world—all particulars in a history stubbornly persisting—were consigned to evanescence and in the deepest sense left untouched. Nietzsche was right (and, perhaps, paradoxically, *Jewish*) when he claimed vitality for the particular: "and to the eunuch one woman is the same as another, merely a woman, 'woman in herself,' the ever-unapproachable." If the bequeather must vanish in the flesh, the bequest (from Judaism *via* Hellenism to the "Judeo-Christian tradition") will become so transmuted as to belie its own name.

IV

The adjective "Judeo-Christian" is coin of the realm of interfaith relations. It has an irenic ring, and many Jews accept the combination. Instead of contempt for Jewish values, it seems to promise respect, and a ticket of admission to Western culture. Unfortunately, it is a children's ticket, not an adult's; and admission under these terms dismisses the authenticity of Judaism.

Somehow, the Christian component assimilates, it seems, all the Judaism anyone needs, so that Judaism *tout court* is superfluous. And Jewish identity is watered down so that Jewish survival seems irrelevant. Why not relax with a happy sigh into the great continuum? But the meaning of Jewish survival, Jewish life, is to testify to life —"to life!," "*l'hayyim*," is the Jewish toast—and the Hebrew Bible, not the Greek (for all its resurrections), is the testament of life. Whenever Jews complacently echo, with hands across the hyphen, that Christians honor the "Old Testament," they accept themselves as outgrown (and outworn: the "fossil" according to Toynbee). "Old Testament" implies "New Testament," onward and upward—all this and Heaven too—in spurious continuity. But "Old Testament," preempted by Christians to paste it together with "New," is a different book from the Hebrew Bible in solitary splendor (and not merely because of the flaws in the Greek translation from Hebrew). Jews should know the value of the One. It should not be for Jews, of all people, to mix the meat with the milk and water.

Over the centuries, Jewish apologetics have changed their tone. For normative Christianity, Marcionism (the contention that New Testament and Old Testament stand for good and evil, respectively) is heresy. Therefore, in the officially orthodox Middle Ages, Christians stressed, as a matter of faith, that the Old Testament flowed into the New. The Synagogue was a broken image (*vide* the famous figure in the Strasbourg cathedral), but the Jewish Bible was not broken off. The great set theme of all those Christian-Jewish disputations, convened under Christian auspices, was the theme of continuity. Christians purported to show, from the Jewish scriptures themselves, that a Christian culmination was expected. It was the Jews who held to the thesis of a radical discontinuity. Christians, they said, were welcome to their New Testament, but should see it for what it was: a radical new departure.

In modern times, when so many liberties began to be taken with Christian orthodoxy, the terms of the argument changed. Liberal Christians tended to convert their New Testament into an edifying document, not a transcendental witness. The Gospels were sublime but not divine, except in a metaphorical sense. And then, so much of the Old Testament was not sublime. So many pages of smite, smote, smitten: over how many liberal pulpits have the Amalekites been littered, and the wretched Israelites, with their tribal Jehovah, shredded! Jews rose to the occasion (in a manner of speaking) with an effort to close the breach. Their Bible (well, maybe not Judges . . .) was edifying, too, and rabbinical *midrash*, the Jews' extension of biblical teaching, had all the sweetness that Christians could claim for *their* extension. If only Christians would stop preening themselves for standing on a higher plane, and realize that the Rabbis matched the Apostles and Fathers in largeness of spirit, we could all be Judeo-Christian together.

This was all very well. Liberal Christians might admit Hillel into the club. But he had to be sponsored, patronized. The Hebrew will turn Christian, "he grows kind." Darwinism, progressive evolutionary theory, could shape religious conviction as well as shake it. Christianity remained on a higher plane. Jews, even still as Jews, could be helped aboard, for liberal theology usually had some psychological link with liberality of spirit, but Judaism in the last analysis was pre-Christian and sub-Christian, fossilized and fixed. It was lower than Christianity, really a different and dead species of religion, not just (unrecognized by Jews) the proto-Christian *praeparatio evangelica*.

What had happened in Christianity, essentially, with a Jewish reaction to match, was something ineffably suburban. It was the banishment of revelation (whereby an objective God speaks to the subject) in favor of narcissism (aren't we *nice* to make such a nice God-idea for ourselves?). One of the nice things was a God of love distinctly more spiritual than the God of retributive justice (or even injustice). This sentimental separation has a great deal to do with what Nietzsche saw as the blandness of the New Testament. In contrast, the strength, the life, of the Old Testament is partly in its tension, in its straining correlation of justice *and* mercy. How can mercy exist unless the normal course of justice exists, perhaps (in mercy) to be set aside? As the liturgy for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, has it: "If man is judged with perfect justice, who shall stand?" Jonah, the prophetic portion that follows the second and last of the Torah readings on Yom Kippur, tells the quintessential story. Justice for Nineveh would be its destruction; but Jonah fears (with justice) that *t'shuvah*, "turning," atone-

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ment, would engage God's mercy, and make Jonah's prophecy of justice abortive. God, who has to be God of justice to be God of mercy, chides Jonah. Jews, in choosing this as the central prophetic reading of the Jewish year, embrace the principle of the chiding—as though mercy were justice's confutation instead of its correlative.

Mercy exists because man can change, and his fate, too, can change. Where there is one God, fate is not a goddess, man's fate is not inexorably determined. That is why the Hebrew prophets were hortatory, not deterministic. The prophets (at least the prophets of the Books) were moralists, not seers—which is why partisans of the New Testament, with their commitment to a fanciful exegesis that makes Old Testament prophecy seem literally "realized," appear to Jews as partisans of the letter, not of the spirit. Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh was not realized. A truly omnipotent God is not bound by a text, so history is not bound to a textual exegesis, as man ("in the image of God"), a creator who can break and refashion the conditions that seem to bind him, is not bound to a fate allegedly prophesied. Prophecy, in the Hebrew Bible, is not so mechanistic.

One might say that the New Testament has this correlation: justice (for the fall) making possible mercy (through atonement). But here, truly, is legalism, the abstract weighing of pleasures and pains. God here seems Roman-bureaucratic, limited. He provides a channel for redemption and then must go through channels Himself, for He can redeem only through the machinery, the apparatus of the cross. Christian trinitarianism seems to impugn monotheism here, and not just in the literal sense that three is, simply, three, not three-in-one or one-in-three, the famous holy mystery. The crucial damage to monotheism is in the implication that God's power, His flexibility, is impugned. Once God has set up the treasury of grace (filled enough for all men forever, through the totally undeserved suffering of the vicarious sufferer), all who deserve the suffering of divine punishment can draw on the treasury to pay their debts. The divine books balance, since the crucifixion supplies infinite recompense for the infinite accumulation of human guilt. Men can draw on the treasury; they must draw, to be saved. That is the law of salvation.

It is for Christians, not Jews, then, that law seems really a yoke that no one can throw off—not man, not God. For God is not free to save when He has to be paid in one specific coin, whether drawn on by faith or paid in the individual destiny of the faith-less individual. Once He has set it up, even God cannot interfere with the abstract, legal balance. Far from being the sole Lord, the untrammeled executive of justice and mercy, He seems, with a holy book of *this* sort, an inexorable, impersonal bookkeeper. Paul put God in this situation when he bequeathed to Christianity his idiosyncratic interpretation of man's first disobedience. The fruit was guilt, and its consequence, damnation. The way out was the transfer of debt to Corporation Christi, where there was ample credit with which to pay. In terms of the Hebrew Bible, this is not a biblical faith; this reading of Genesis is Christian, not "Judeo-Christian."

For to Jews, with biblical warranty, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge meant, not the impressment into hell, but the expulsion from Eden. That is, man became man, in his actual, historical, human situation—pain, travail, sweat of the brow. "Knowledge" means individuation, discrimination, the break in Edenic continuum of ego and object, the awareness of life which is the awareness of passion (suffering), and of passing time, and death. The fatal flaw in man becomes for Paul the basis of damnation. But for Jews, for a Saul but not a Paul, it becomes the grounds for mercy, since man is not bound to be more than man, and as such his nature must be flawed, which God knows and *excuses*. "Never again [after Noah and the Flood] will I doom the world because of man, *since* the inclinations of man's heart are evil from his youth."

It is the Jewish inference that man cannot identify with God in substance, but can imitate God (within limits) in action. The Christian inference, for all the variations on *imitatio Christi* which Christian literature affords, is that the imitation of Christ is not only ultimately impossible, but undesired. Christ is as he is, sinless, not really to inspire men to the same condition, but to compensate for the impossibility of such an inspiration. He cannot remove man's original sin, he can only pay for it. Therefore, the Christian emphasis is on communion, assimilation, oneness in essence —not action. To Judaism, man can (and must) remain man, not flee to absorption in God out of the conviction that man, if only man, is doomed.

Man is not condemned for what is of his essence. To have that essence, to be man in the world beyond the Garden, is its own condemnation, and the sole condemnation (to life, not to hell) which that essence implies for man. And this condemnation is not condign, since in life, in history, man can be redeemed. Plunged by the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (of good and evil) into the midst of life, man may work his way back from time to eternity by way of the (metaphorical) Tree of Life, from the Sinai of revelation and burning bush. "For I give you good doctrine, foresake ye not My law. It is a Tree of Life to them who grasp it. . . . Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace." If knowledge of good and evil made man the man he is, in life, in history, action, the heeding of commandments (not the assent to propositions), redeems life and assures life by making it good, not evil. The condition of life, the condition of *choice*, is not a curse. To choose well in life is nothing less than to choose life itself. "Therefore choose life." This choice is good and sufficient.

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Intellectuals, Japanese-Style

Edward Seidensticker

OVER Japan in the last years of the American occupation there hung an air of breathless expectancy. People had kept quiet for a few years during the war, when it had been unwise to speak, and they had kept politely quiet during the years of the occupation too, while the Americans were teaching them to be democratic. They had worn an air of eager attention as they had learned their lesson. But what were they all going to say when the Americans left, these unquestionably intelligent people who had looked for so long as if they had all manner of interesting things to say? When the San Francisco Treaty came and they all started talking, they all said very much the same thing, and it was ghastly.

The effect was as of seeing ourselves parodied. We who were young in those days had been formed by the New Deal, and it had made us suspicious of the arrangements effected by our elders, whose laissez-faire had about it the look of greedy irresponsibility. The great assumption from which we made our departure was that men are greedy and must be restrained by other men. Among the subsidiary assumptions was that men behave most irresponsibly in societies in which they are least restrained by other men. In other words: Americans do the most awful things.

Now here were all these Japanese saying just that; and it was all wrong. The greater premise for them too was that an earlier generation had arranged things badly, and the lesser was that the American model was the one to be avoided. How it should have become so with all those nice Americans around teaching the democratic lesson is a curious problem. It may have been because the Americans were such a presence and their hypocrisy showed; and one was not without a suspicion that the essential harmlessness of the Americans had something to do with the matter. America and American institutions could be criticized with impunity. In any event, the lesser assumption was allowed to run away with things, and so the effect was as of seeing one's own assumptions gone mad. We had associated laissez-faire, another word for "capitalism," never very clearly defined, with irresponsibility. The Japanese intellectuals associated it with war. Although we had had our Nye Committee establishing a bond between war and profit, the difference in tone between the Japanese view and our own was emphatic enough to make us see that that was not what we really wished to be talking about at all.

I myself was quickly transformed into a patriot. Everything was so simple for these people. War was for them the great evil, and the origins of war were in capitalism. Peace, on the other hand, was socialism, which resided over there behind the Kremlin walls and (why, the very name proclaimed the fact) the Gate of Heavenly Peace. As the scales fell away and it became apparent to us that the pursuit of profit is not the only thing people are up to and other things can be far uglier, the effort to claw the scales from the eyes of others was maddening. There were so many intellectual assemblies I wanted to stand up in the middle of and cry out: "Have you not eyes to see?" Once or twice I did, and was administered a soothing potion and a patient smile. If people did not already know that Americans can be naively impulsive, they did then.

Having held their peace for so long, Japanese intellectuals set about putting the world and history retroactively into order. The fact that the order was so clear and simple might have alerted them to the fact that it was not very realistic; but reality had been lost sight of, or had ceased to matter. Was there trouble in Berlin the other day? Yes, there was trouble in Berlin the other day, and its source was the recalcitrance of the Americans. Have the endeavors of the Czechs to push politically westward been frustrated? Yes, it is ever so with the endeavors of the Czechs, and that is because they are victims of Madison Avenue deceit, a thing of which *we* and we may say it with some emphasis, will never be victims.

When something that seemed indisputably good came from American hands, it suffered from the disability of its origins, and would have been better if it had come from peaceful socialist hands. This was especially true in the case of peace itself. Instead of thanking John Foster Dulles for an early and generous peace treaty (the prime minister did, but he was notoriously unintellectual), the intellectuals screamed their denunciation of a

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treaty that did not also include the Russians. It will be remembered that George F. Kennan was quietly murmuring his support for a treaty that included the Russians even as the Japanese intellectuals were screaming theirs, and certainly it could be argued that an overall settlement, including also a settlement in Korea, would have been better for us all. What made the position of the intellectuals seem so dreamy and unreal, however, was the fact that the recalcitrance clearly lay on the side of the Russians. The devices proposed for overcoming it seemed every bit as dreamy, for they showed utter confusion as to its origins. Someone actually proposed the division of Japan. The division of Austria, the strongly intuitive and very elusive argument seemed to go, had been for Stalin a demonstration that the higher interests of peace and socialism lay elsewhere. Very well then, give him Hokkaido, and see if the same thing might not be demonstrated a second time. It is doubtful that Kennan ever thought of Dulles as his principal adversary, the man whose contrariness was the principal source of the trouble. The Japanese intellectual did, however, and his solution was to deal stronger and ever stronger cards to Stalin. Give it a try, give it a try, one wanted to cry out in exasperation. There might then have been the pleasure of a Korean solution, so to speak. The Koreans have preserved their cultural identity over the centuries by being very difficult people, and the company of Japanese intellectuals might just possibly have demonstrated to Stalin that the higher interests of socialism did indeed lie elsewhere. He might have seen that he would rather have them on our side than his.

IT WAS very sobering to see how people who were so intelligent—that undeniable fact cannot be stated too often—and whose business should have been the pursuit of truth could be so indefatigable in pursuing patent untruths. To blame the United States for *all* the unpleasantness in the world, even if there had been vast quantities of evidence to support such a notion, would have been among the least promising of departures in the search for a way to avoid future unpleasantness, for it proposed as a modest beginning that the United States and its works disappear. All this view of things could offer was a series of unlikely conclusions to highly prejudiced conditions: *if* the United States were to cease supporting this and that government, the Soviet Union would cease trying to overthrow it; *if* it were not for those truculent South Koreans and their American allies, the North Koreans would be happy to stay at home and build dams; *if* there were no American presence here and there and everywhere, there would be no need for an answering presence. If the Americans would but lie down, why then the Russians would be gracious.

But even this statement of the case does not do justice to its neatness. The solutions to all the problems were really semantic, the neatest of all solutions. Imperialism, war, and capitalism were the same thing. Peace, anti-imperialism, and socialism were the same thing. Capitalism pushed out in its maritime way to create empires, but when a great metropolitan center in North China or Eastern Europe pushed overland to subjugate alien peoples, it was not and could not be imperialism, because the heart of the matter, there in the fastness of North China and Eastern Europe, was socialist.

We Americans in Japan laughed when, in the early 1960's, the vigorous new Kennedy administration sent out a vigorous new ambassador to resume what he called an interrupted dialogue with the Japanese Left. We knew that there could be no dialogue unless he apologized for everything, in which case it would have to be a pretty craven sort of dialogue. In fact there was none, though there were exchanges of a sort. No one was persuaded, and so the exchanges, the whole point of which should have been to try to persuade someone of something, specifically, the Japanese intellectual of certain dangers which he quite refused to admit, were pointless. The twain proceeded down parallel lines and did not meet.

Not all the intellectuals were alike even in those days, but the ones who refrained from mouthing the orthodox formulas and solutions were in a small minority. There was an establishment of the Left, and it dominated the newspapers and magazines. When an editor made bold to carry an article by a representative of the minority, he had to apologize to the orthodox congregation. Making plans for the day of wrath, when the congregation would have its way and utter peace and socialism would descend over the land, one had no trouble at all drawing up lists of those who would be saved. But the number was small, of those who had spoken out against the great terrestrial empires as well as the maritime empires; who had been prepared to discuss ways of improving treaty relations with the United States, instead of blithely asking that they cease to exist; who could see provocation and intransigence emerging from the peaceful socialist camp. The vast majority of the intellectuals of the establishment were so busy agreeing with one another, redoing the same familiar recipes for the same magazines, that they had lost track of reality. By easy stages, agreeing with itself every step of the way, the intellectual establishment had worked itself into uncompromising and somewhat transcendental dogma.

Far too many of one's youthful days were wasted in anger. To those who remarked regretfully upon their inability to read Japanese, and enviously upon the rich harvest of understanding which a knowledge of the language must provide, the proper answer was that they did not know how lucky they were. They did not know what an inexhaustible supply of drivel it was that one curled up with when one curled up with the monthly magazines. So much of it was so patently untruthful and even so absurd that it was not

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worth getting angry over. Now, years later, the anger seems a deplorable waste, cutting in so grievously on one's supply of days. The intellectuals went on muttering mystic formulas to one another and changed nothing; and so they did not matter, and should not have been allowed to provoke anger.

THERE is a way in which they did and do matter, however. Though much given to grand formulations about the nature of the universe and man's place therein, the Japanese are a down-to-earth, methodical people when the question before them is what to do next. The prescriptions of the intellectuals did not give promise of working to much effect of any sort, and so they were not followed. In ever rarer isolation, they went on contriving new prescriptions for one another. A deplorable result is that Japan is today without a parliamentary opposition that anyone takes seriously. The conservatives seem destined to rule for a very long time, perhaps forever, if they can keep their factions together and avoid hubris. The conservative party is really a coalition, and it faces the classic problem of coalitions, how to give its several factions due access to the till. Computers happily project lines into the future, holding to be inevitable the eventual emergence of a disgruntled urban populace that will throw the rascals out; but it is all like the old puzzle of proceeding half the distance to the goal and never arriving. Each advance of the opposition in the direction of power creates in the public a new awareness of how very silly the opposition really is, and so the goal recedes into the distance. What the public wants, said a canny political observer recently, is an opposition to enter protest votes for. Such an opposition is by definition perpetual.

Many are happy enough with this situation, which has produced a series of faceless, harmless prime ministers (the man who said in the New York *Times* recently that the personality cult has been more of a problem in Japan than in China quite outdid himself in intellectual whimsy); but in others it produces explosive exasperation, and the corrupting effect of unchallenged power seems undeniable. It is useless to vote for one of the opposition parties, and so what can one do but explode? It is useless because none of them provides a moderate alternative, changing this but leaving that alone, repairing a balance without turning everything on its head. Most of all it is useless to vote for the Grand Old Party of the establishment of the Left, the Socialist party of Japan. For the Socialists everything must change before anything can change, and this is not what the electorate has in mind. A party with interesting thoughts about land prices, the most pressing of all problems for the resident of the megalopolis, might be worth listening to, but not a party for which revolution is a prerequisite to reform. The Grand Old Party will be out in the cold for a very long time, perhaps forever, and we must be satisfied with such morsels of reform as the conservatives deign to hand out from time to time; and for this state of affairs the Japanese intellectuals and their faulty diagnoses and formulations are in very large measure responsible.

In not every respect have they seemed unique, however. Coming back across the Pacific from time to time, one found something that looked very similar. The revisionists had taken over in America, and they too seemed to have lost sight of something very important, the fact that back there at the beginning of it all there had been a real enemy. Yet there did seem to be something peculiarly tenacious about the refusal of the Japanese intellectual to admit patent contradiction for what it was. Many of us had been stubborn too. We were not quick to master the teachings of Orwell and the great purges. The invasion of Hungary still left a possibility of placing the socialist paradise in the remote future, and seeing these setbacks as the eggs that must be broken for the omelette. Khrushchev's revelations could be given the same treatment: there were these little aberrations, but the road to paradise went that way all the same. But when the Chinese started calling the Russians imperialists it was clear that something was wrong. From one of the great centers of peace and socialism there came radiating a force which could not, unless the second center was suffering from delusions so considerable as to be a denial of itself, be other than aggressive and imperialist. If terrestrial imperialism was possible and could reach out from the fastnesses of socialism, then the world must cease to be a place of clear distinctions. Right and wrong became much harder to define, and there must be an element of the latter in at least one of the two great socialist centers, and who then could be sure that there was not an element of the former in the land of capitalism?

It must be granted, to the credit of the Japanese intellectuals, that they were not wholly insensitive to these difficulties. A hush fell over the landscape, and circulation figures showed that the magazines for which the intellectuals of the establishment wrote no longer commanded the audiences they once had. The congregation had dwindled. Ironically, this development came in Japan at just about the time when the New Left and revisionism were taking over in the United States. There was a twilight hour, as the United States seemed to be entering a darkness from which Japan was emerging, when the intellectual mood of Japan seemed the more promising of the two. The shock of the Sino-Soviet split had been enough to make the Japanese intellectual establishment look back in some disarray at the apparent facts from which the delusion had sprung. In America, on the other hand, one overwhelming fact seemed by way of producing great delusions: the United States had become involved in an ugly war. The reasons for that war must also be ugly. Those who said that there had been real enemies, back there at the beginning of it all, lied. Those who argued that

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there had been at least a possibility of doing good in Vietnam became ugly, immoral Americans.

But it was difficult to establish statistics and solid facts to accord with the hush that fell over the Japanese landscape. The effect upon the Grand Old Party was the next thing, the very next thing, indeed, to nil. One sensed a certain disarray in the ranks of the intellectuals, but there were not many signs of apostasy, conversions to the view that America might just possibly be right from time to time. Some of the intellectuals looked to the one socialist center for the truth, some looked to the other, and some managed to pretend, particularly in the higher reaches of the party bureaucracy, that socialism still spoke with one voice. The semantic solution to the problems of the world still applied. It was still possible, by virtue of being a socialist, to be near the fountainhead of self-evident truth. It was possible, for instance, to espouse the Chinese cause in the curious matter of "hegemony" and pretend that it had no reference to the Russians. "Hegemony" was something which the Chinese were against, and they demanded that the Japanese be against it too, by inserting an anti-hegemony clause into the peace treaty under negotiation between the two countries. The Chinese have not, in the matter of hegemony, the slightest doubt in naming targets and adversaries: they are latter-day Monroes, and they wish the Russians to stay out of their hemisphere.

Some of the reasons for the stubbornness of the illusions are not hard to see, and not uniquely Japanese. There is the fact that, once stuck with a story, a person feels compelled to stand by it. A socialism uncertainly rooted in fact from the outset can be made to seem rooted, after a fashion, even when the process of deracination is far advanced, and for the self-respect of the faithful it must be made so to seem, for a while yet. Then there is the fact that money and prestige are involved. Someone who has won prominence as a propagandist for peace and socialism cannot turn against these synonymous causes without risking loss of income and esteem. These are lures to intellectuals the whole world over; but the losses are greater, as the rewards have been greater, and not many intellectuals anywhere have headed such adoring congregations as some of these Japanese. Then there is a fondness for lost causes, likely to be somewhat exaggerated in Japan, and, closely akin to it, a fondness for highly abstract causes. Here the Japanese quite outdo themselves, as if to compensate and apologize for the national pragmatism. Socialism has been something to fight for because it was not adequately fought for some scores of years ago, when there was another chance; and the fight can be endlessly rewarding, and merely endless, because it is safe and orthodox, and its abstractness means that it can never be wholly discredited. Peace and socialism may blur and waver from time to time, but to cease believing in them is like ceasing to believe in virtue. No one is more righteous than a pragmatist turned moralist, or more resourceful in making the sanctions fit every situation.

Carried thus far, the matter begins to take on a very Japanese look once more. When a cause is pursued so tenaciously, and contradictions apparent to a child can be overlooked, and the all too apparent failure of a god is not enough to require that new gods be sought, then it comes to seem that faith itself is more important than the object of faith, the wardenship of the compass more important than the direction the compass points. We are back to a very ancient way of doing things. We are back, indeed, to the "Way" itself, to the cult of steadfastness and sincerity, making of an intense dedication to principle something more important than any principle. As one watches the modern intellectual pursue his Way even as the medieval warrior pursued his, one has a wistful sense of having been evicted from or refused admission to the club. It is the Japanese thing which the rest of us do not do. It brings the Japanese Left and Right together in their own freemasonry. Not by accident did Yukio Mishima have the most extremely virtuous of his characters in pursuit of something known as "purity," and not by accident was the culminating act of Mishima's own life, his suicide, one which defies classification as of the Right or of the Left, and brings together, apostles all of sincerity, the student who beats out the brains of his colleagues because they will not see virtue precisely as he sees it, and the suburban mother who refuses to chide such sincerity, and even, one has reason to suspect from having talked to him, the police detective who has been called in to do something about it. Class and ideology are surmounted by this dedication to sincerity.

The extremes to which it can go are astonishing. It brings a blurring of the distinction between art and life which no amount of persuasion can correct. The purity of that Mishima character, one argues, seeking to persuade, is insane and monstrous not because there are not such people but because Mishima has failed to provide him with adequate motives. We could accept his purity if it were given fictitious justification, made into something believable and acceptable by its own self-sufficient lights, in its own world, if not by ours and in ours. So one might argue, seeking to define the blurring and ask that it be corrected; but the endeavor fails. If the counterpart of that Mishima character actually lives, and most assuredly he does, for we can see him here before us, then the validity of the fictional character is not to be denied its radiant being by our arbitrary, formalistic tests of truth.

That we have him before us is most certainly not to be denied. There the radical students are beating one another's brains out, almost a score of fatalities already this year. There they were off in the mountains a few years ago, administering the most cruel and inhuman of punishments, casting

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their comrades out helpless in the cold to starve and freeze to death. There they were in Lod airport, slaughtering all those Puerto Ricans in the cause of Palestinian liberation. They have hijacked and destroyed airplanes, and they have blown up buildings. Beginning in late 1974 the offices and plants of a series of big companies were bombed, and when the culprits were apprehended early this year, they were found to belong to three tiny little bands with very romantic names, the Wolf, the Fang, and the Scorpion. As if to demonstrate their sincerity beyond reasonable doubt, and as if hoping to be apprehended so that their sincerity might be displayed before the world, they had left behind clues, notable among them a magazine describing what they were up to, and evidences of an interest in the continent (the full name of that one little group was Fang of the Continent) which presently found consummation in the bombing of a Korean research institute. Once apprehended, they were very polite, and after an appropriate period of silence, to show that they knew their rights, they commenced confessing, again as if the whole point has been to demonstrate sincerity. They aroused much sympathy high and low. There were cries of indignation in the press, to be sure, but they did not ring quite true, and my own sampling of public opinion, intellectual to taxi driver, suggested that such sincerity was hard to deny and reject. Many a taxi driver offered it as his view that the blue-eyed one from over the sea would never begin to understand these very Japanese happenings.

It really *is* very Japanese. It amounts to a cult of sincere violence—and in a society remarkable for its conformity and its docile acceptance. The very docility provides a sort of immediate explanation for the cult. There is a great deal wrong with the society so docilely accepted, and the bind into which the establishment of the Left has worked itself is largely responsible. Electoral procedures, thanks to the refusal of the Left to think of partial solutions, offer no alternative to the conservative government which has been there all along and done so little to relieve the frustrations, especially of the urban populace; and so a good bombing now and then lets off steam, and gives a vicarious sense of having done something, even if nothing at all has been changed.

But the strain of violence in this docile society is very old, perhaps the oldest thing of all. A peculiar intensity comes over the taxi driver as he indicates feelings of fellowship with the bombers. It takes him out of reach. He has joined an ancient communion, of those who do not really believe in the evil nature of man. Society is responsible for distortions and misdoings, and things right themselves when a primitive, natural purity is restored. It is the absolute, and when it is at work one defers and declines to pass judgment. There is wonder in the voices of Mishima's friends as they describe his last months. He withdrew from the more ordinary communion into the communion of the pure, and in the name of purity are committed wondrous acts upon which the courts of man do not pass judgment.

If one *would* be angry, back in those youthful days, the cult of sincerity might have been the better thing to be angry at, because it was the deeper thing. As the radical Right and the radical Left came nearer and nearer, on the far side of the circle from the point where one thought of oneself as standing, that was what brought them together, doing more than anything to account for the tenacity with which the intellectual clung to his delusions, establishing more than anything the emotional sources of his blindness to obvious contradiction and untruth.

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Observations

Mann in His Letters

Arthur A. Cohen

FOLLOWING the publication of *Buddenbrooks* in 1901, it became Thomas Mann's daily custom, when his ritual hours at the writing desk had ended shortly after noon, to attend to the obligations which fame had brought him. Foremost among such obligations was an already immense correspondence—it is the reliable estimate of experts who have consulted the Mann archives in Zurich that during his lifetime, from his boyhood in Lübeck to his last days, Mann wrote some twenty thousand letters. In later years, after he had come to the United States and settled in California, he acquired the habit—which he did not like—of dictating his correspondence to a secretary, and the letters of those years are as often typewritten as handwritten. He preferred his correspondence to be handmade, so to speak, but it is still a question whether he wanted it to be personal.

Fame confers a hunger for, and a terror of, communal voyeurism, and in the correspondence of the famous the issue of how much the writer should be aware of the potentially large audience that will be attending his "private" utterances cannot be far from the surface of his consideration. When he reveals himself, how much should he reveal, even to his intimates? As for us, his readers, with what degree of ironic perspective should we, at this late date, view his revelations? Such questions are all the more pressing in the case of a figure like Mann, whose complex views on the relation between the private individual and public life in the 20th century—a relation, indeed, that forms the subject of more than one of his novels—might be expected to come into focus in his voluminous private writings.

The principal correspondences of Mann that have been published so far in English include a selection from Erika Mann's three-volume German edition of her father's letters with supplementary addenda; the complete correspondences with Hermann Hesse (which begins in 1910) and with Erich Kahler, the philosopher and intellectual historian (which begins in 1931); and, finally, the extensive exchange between Mann and the classicist historian of myth and ancient religion, Karl Kerenyi, which was inaugurated by Kerenyi in 1934 and was pursued to the end of Mann's life.* German editions have also appeared of Mann's correspondence with his early friend, Ernst Bertram, with whom he broke when Bertram joined the Nazis, and with his lifelong German publisher, Samuel Fischer, as well as several others of specialized interest. The value of these correspondences, quite apart from their internal character and content, is that they afford a control experiment, a narrow segregation of sensibility in which, over the decades, one can discover how Mann's private voice varies, when and how it acquires the modulations of the public person. The wonder is that it varies so little.

IN HIS illuminating little book, *The Orbit of Thomas Mann*, Erich Kahler, one of Mann's closest friends, described him as a "man of mind." The man of mind in Kahler's view is one "for whom supra-personal problems and decisions are a personal concern, one who no longer draws a line between the personal and supra-personal" (as opposed to an intellectual, who in Kahler's terms is more of a specialist or expert). The man of mind is a generalist, and he is also, as Kahler thought Thomas Mann to be, someone who exercises "personal responsibility for the human condition."

It fits, of course. Thomas Mann was an autodidact who moved through literatures, philosophies, religions as the needs of the imagination required, picking up whole disciplines and leaving them behind when the occasion passed. For *The Magic Mountain*, Mann became expert in matters of medicine, biology, pharmacology, engineering, meteorology, radiology, and psychology, as well as the other more abstract disciplines of philosophy and theology; for *Joseph and His Brothers*, myth, religion, Semitic languages, ancient history; for *Doctor Faustus*, musical theory, the history of music and musical instruments, medieval literature and old German, the variants of the Faust legend, the history of diabolism and of the devil. But once the novel which required the disciplines was completed, the source

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* *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889-1955,* selected and translated by Richard and Clara Winston, introduction by Richard Winston, Knopf (1971), 690 pp., $17.50. *The Hesse-Mann Letters, 1910-1955,* edited by Anni Carlsson and Volker Michels, translated by Ralph Mannheim, annotations by Wolfgang Sauerlander, foreword by Theodore Ziolkowski, Harper & Row, 196 pp., $10.00. *An Exceptional Friendship: The Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Erich Kahler,* translated by Richard and Clara Winston, Cornell University Press, 196 pp., $12.50. *Mythology and Humanism: The Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Karl Kerenyi,* translated by Alexander Gelley, Cornell University Press, 231 pp., $12.50.

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books were cleared away, the notebooks filed, and the information was promptly forgotten.

Mann was insistent that he was not an intellectual, and equally insistent that as a "man of mind" all that really mattered to him was what remained behind, embedded in the fictions. Yet at the same time he did indeed harbor a view of himself as something other than a solitary man doing his work in private, disconnected from the world of public concerns and manipulations, preoccupied by considerations which the world would only overhear when a new book was published. He was from early on someone who felt "personal responsibility for the human condition."

When he began to feel this way is a question of interest. The letters of Mann's early maturity are immensely youthful, childishly formal, self-preoccupied, full of reports of visits to the opera and exhibits, the acquisition of (but not the judgment upon) important books, social notes without a point of view. These years—the last years of the century—were not uneventful: Mann's first stories had begun to appear, and his first story collection; he had left the employ of the South German Fire Insurance Company, the university, the editorial offices of *Simplicissimus*, the army in which he had served less than a year, and he was awaiting word from Samuel Fischer about the fate of *Buddenbrooks*. But with the important exception of those to his older brother, Heinrich, there is virtually nothing in the letters of these years of the anxiety or the ecstasy which one would have thought commonplace in the letters of men of genius (one need only think of the early letters of Proust or Rilke). Even with the writing of *Buddenbrooks* behind him, the young Mann still seems submerged, getting by with acceptable postures and modes, amusingly arrogant self-assertiveness, or obviously false conceits like the exclamation that he was an "arrogant decadent" who would find it "extraordinarily refreshing to be bawled out ruthlessly and vigorously" during military service.

THE letters to Heinrich are the exception that proves the rule (as, later, the letters to Katia Pringsheim would also be). The new century opened for the twenty-five-year-old Mann without an answer from Samuel Fischer, with money problems, concern about his future as a writer ("I think I would become a bank clerk. These fits come over me sometimes"), thoughts of suicide, dreadful depressions followed by "pure and unexpected inner joy, with experiences that cannot be told and the mere hint of which would naturally sound like boasting." The letter to his brother which contains these disclosures, this gloom, and this exaltation, the postulating of his possession of something "sincere, warm, and good" which is "not just 'irony'," contains, as well, further down in the same unbroken paragraph, a melodramatic outburst:

> Ah, literature is death! I shall never understand how anyone can be dominated by it without utterly hating it. Its ultimate and best lesson is this: to see death as a way of achieving its antithesis: *life*. I dread the day, and it is not far off, when I shall again be shut up alone with my work, and I fear that the egotistic inner desiccation and over-refinement will then make rapid progress.

Only after this statement (which contains the embryonic theme of his first masterpiece, *The Magic Mountain*, still twenty years away from completion) does he announce to his brother, whose own first novel had just been published to controversy and praise, that Fischer had broken into his "exaltation and suicidal self-disgust" with the decision to publish *Buddenbrooks*, uncut and "probably in three volumes" (two would prove sufficient). Mann continues, "I shall have my picture taken, right hand tucked into the vest of my dinner jacket, the left resting on the three volumes. Then I might really go down happy to my grave."

The evident confusions of those early years of the century when Mann still regarded himself as ensnared by a protracted adolescence, still drawing a "line between the personal and the supra-personal," were immensely clarified by the enormous success which *Buddenbrooks* came to enjoy. The book started slowly, reviews were mixed, but within three years it had sold 30,000 copies in Germany alone. Mann had definitely emerged from the shadows to a resounding fame which was never again to desert him. Writing of that period in his *Sketch of My Life* (1930), he noted: "It was fame. I was snatched up in a whirl of success. My mail was swollen, money flowed in streams, my picture appeared in the papers, a hundred pens made copy of the product of my secluded hours, the world embraced me amid congratulations and shouts of praise."

THE physical picture of the Thomas Mann of those years is not at variance with the persona of his letters—a man astonishingly formal, correct, his mustache as trimmed as his bearing, shorn of excess, dash, or abandon. Only when Mann enters upon his courtship of Katia Pringsheim in early 1904 do we encounter in him for the first time a raw, vulnerable, authentic passion, even though that passion remains characteristically restrained, pressed through the mesh of intelligence, checked by the obligations of form. Mann determined to meet Katia when he saw her answering back to a rude streetcar conductor sometime toward the end of 1903 (Katia Mann recollects in *Unwritten Memories**). Thereupon, contriving invitations and working through intermediaries, he gained entrance to the Pringsheim circle and laid cautious siege to Katia, then not even twenty-one, a brilliant student of mathematics and physics. The twenty-four surviving letters of the courtship, occasioned by her apparent disinclination to marry and later by her separation from Mann while she accompanied her father to a spa where he was recovering from a serious illness, are splendid.

The Mann who said "literature is death" saw Katia Pringsheim as life—as vitality, energy, truthfulness, unreflexive spontaneity: in other words, as his compatible opposite. The fact that Katia did not

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* *Katia Mann: Unwritten Memories*, edited by Elisabeth Plessen and Michael Mann, translated by Hunter and Hildegarde Hannum, Knopf, 165 pp., $7.95.

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immediately tumble to the young celebrity made her all the more desirable, impelling Mann to move from the safe ground of self-appraisal in the early letters ("You know that for many years, *important* years, I regarded myself as nothing, humanly speaking, and wished to be considered only an artist") to insinuations of a shared superiority to the commonplace ("Everything naive, noble, and devout is 'stupid,' all intrepid devotion on this earth. *Let us* be 'stupid,' my Katia") to a guarded assertion of sexual conquest shortly before they became engaged ("Oh, you amazing, painfully sweet, painfully tangy creature! Longing—*Sehnsucht*! You don't know how I love the word. It is my favorite word, my holy word, my magic formula, my key to the mystery of the world").

Katia Mann has said of these letters: "Thomas Mann wrote me wonderfully beautiful letters—he *did* know how to write—which naturally impressed me, but which I didn't answer quite so beautifully." What she answered, we do not know. Indeed, we would undoubtedly not have Mann's letters to Katia, either—so revealing and so full of self-disclosure—had Mann not incorporated them, verbatim, into his novel *Königliche Hoheit* ("Royal Highness," 1909).

One is entitled to speculate they may have unconsciously been intended for this purpose all along. The truth is as Mann claimed it to be: his fiction was *always* to receive the ardor of his life. Tonio Kröger initially, but then later Felix Krull, and, on another plane, the patriarch Joseph, and Adrian Leverkühn in *Doctor Faustus* (and indeed the old Goethe of *Lotte in Weimar* with whom Mann says he had performed his *unio mystica*), were to express and to give meaning to his interior experience. Mann insisted that every story he wrote was grounded in a historical event to which he had established an intimate connection. The credibility of the fiction, he asserted, rested within the contours of the original episode; nothing was simply made up. This should not be taken at face value: what he meant was not that he worked without imagination, but that what he imagined was real. Fiction was more the life of Mann than his life itself.

In a 1906 letter to the critic Kurt Martens, who had published an essay on "The Mann Brothers" critical of this very tendency in Mann, which he equated with hatred of life and pleasure, Mann formulates his view of the artist's purpose with some asperity. "It won't do to attribute to me 'icy misanthropy' and 'lovelessness' toward everything flesh and blood' which is 'replaced' by a fanatic worship of art." Mann reminds Martens that *Tonio Kröger* and his play, *Fiorenza* (1905), were "full of irony toward art, and written into *Tonio Kröger* is a confession of love for life which verges on the inartistic in its overtness and directness." As for the charge of personal asceticism, Mann acknowledges its justness, but transforms it into a triumph of conscience: "I am an ascetic insofar as my *conscience* directs me toward *achievement* in contrast to pleasure and to happiness." Yet this, he asserts, has nothing to do with the workings of the creative imagination, or his ability in fictional representation to encompass the heroic and the sensual. Indeed, the artist himself is in Mann's view first and foremost a man of adventure and danger, an explorer of realms where other men would not or could not venture.

By 1910, when the correspondence with Hermann Hesse, the earliest of the complete correspondences available, begins, Mann had ceased to be a private man, and he was scarcely ever again to extend himself so far, to risk as much disclosure, as in his furious *apologia pro vita sua* to Kurt Martens.

Those letters which we have after the close of the first decade of the century (and even more so after the publication of *The Magic Mountain* in 1924), are marked by a species of formality through which hardly any personal passion is allowed to obtrude—replies to critics, responses to appeals, dealings with the famous, comments on the deteriorating situation of Germany in the post-World War I period, and, after the Hitler era forced him into exile in 1933, letters on behalf of refugees and exiles, political appeals and defenses. By the time of his immigration to the United States in 1939, which might have been expected to summon forth rich commentary on the two cultures or even the two continents, Mann was already old and weary, and had his own work to get on with.

The Mann-Hesse letters are marked by a moral urgency, by truthfulness, and by a mutual respect which is almost familial in character. Each man regarded the other as a beleaguered outpost of humane culture. Where Hesse had declared his pacifist independence as early as World War I, thereafter maintaining an engaged distance from the Germany of both the Weimar and the Hitler years, Mann had to pass through a period of cultural conservatism to a growing contempt for nationalism which emerged in the 20's, was confirmed in the 30's, and became militant anti-fascism thereafter. Hesse did not understand Germany better than did Mann, but he glimpsed more earlier, grounding his political views on a species of natural mysticism which was as affecting as it was sentimental (the poems sent as greetings from Hesse to Mann are ghastly).

Mann, the more wordly of the two, was an immensely loyal friend to Hesse and to Hesse's art, going so far as to defend Hesse to Erich Kahler who in his lectures on the modern novel had dismissed Hesse's work as sentimental gush. Yet *The Hesse-Mann Letters*, preceded by a tendentious foreword by Theodore Ziolkowski, are finally uninteresting. There is not a single exchange which reaches a level of intensity, pain, or enthusiasm, which leaves behind any sense of the immense talents responsible for the pallid words. The letters are full of engaging asides, political comment, biographical detail—but if one were given these letters as an introduction to either writer, there is little likelihood one would be inspired to go further.

The same can be said of the Mann-Kahler correspondence. In fact it may be doubted whether Kahler, had he lived, would have allowed such casual intimacy to be

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given formal publication. The correspondence is affectionate and respectful throughout, but more obtrusive than any substantive issue the two men discuss is the tone of anxiety in which both attempt to interpret the periodic silences between them. Mann puts it on one occasion: "A deeper reason for our mutual not-writing-much may be the feeling that it is unnecessary. Separated in space, we are on the whole experiencing the same things, and each of us knows fairly precisely what the other is feeling and thinking." Yet the sense of discomfort conveyed by the letters overcomes such self-justifying explanations, and indeed, when put together with the periodic silences themselves, goes far toward accounting for the thinness of the correspondence.

Mythology and Humanism: The Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Karl Kerenyi is the only volume of the published correspondences which transcends the difficulties I have been describing, and for reasons worth speculating upon. Karl Kerenyi (1897-1973) had first sent Mann an essay on the Greek god Apollo in 1934, knowing that Mann was engaged in the *Joseph* tetralogy and was preoccupied with mythological archetypes in classical culture. Kerenyi solicited Mann's attention and having once secured it, never let go. The letters between them are marked by a kind of reverential hubris, the younger scholar continually saluting the world-famous master in elegant encomia while feeding him the product of his own imagination and intelligence, until the point arrives at which the master begins to return the compliment, acknowledging, as Mann did, that Kerenyi had played a significant role in elaborating the mythico-religious humanism which is at the base of *Joseph and His Brothers* and the works which succeed it.

The correspondence between Mann and Kerenyi works precisely because the correspondents never sought intimacy. Kerenyi, brilliant and not a little fatuous, wanted Mann in his corner as aid and sponsor (which he became) but not as boon companion, not as someone who might share his mind so completely that correspondence became psychological reinforcement. The letters between them are genuinely illuminating—Kerenyi's intelligence was riveting and clear, his mind filled with lore which he never stinted in sharing. Mann, who all along had been inquisitive, fascinated, somewhat unnerved by the barrage of Kerenyi's learned glosses, comments with a kind of wonder toward the end of the correspondence, during the last year of his life:

> After *Joseph,* I thought to myself: "Yes, certainly, that was an interesting and productive episode, the exchange with that scholar. Now we are fairly well finished with one another, and our ways will presumably separate." Not at all. Nothing of an episode. It seems that in spite of the differences in our modes of expression, our spheres will repeatedly come into contact; and what is to me (and probably to you too) an increasingly striking proximity and parallelism of interests and of intellectual orientations has come to the surface, a phenomenon of predestined friendship in which, for all its strangeness, we acquiesce most happily.

The correspondence with Kerenyi is virtually the only body of letters in which Mann is functioning as an artist, as a "man of mind," and the testimony of these letters yields a truth about Mann as correspondent which deserves to be underscored. What was tolerable in art, what, indeed, the artistic vocation required, was for that reason not to be borne in life. Letter-writing seems to have suggested to Mann an almost obscene nudity, and most of his correspondence appears to have consisted, precisely, in a fastidious reaching for cover in an attempt to protect that dignity with which he was almost pathologically preoccupied his entire life. Only occasionally, in his youth when writing to his older brother Heinrich or to his wife Katia, or in later years when writing to a virtual stranger, could he transform the occasion into an unveiling of self, or voluntarily deal with those issues in which art and intelligence were allowed to overcome his natural sense of vulnerability.

A people that dwells alone

By

YAACOV HERZOG

Diplomat, rabbi, scholar, Yaacov Herzog was a unique product of the twentieth century. He played a key role in shaping Israel's foreign policy, bringing his vision and faith to bear on vital decisions. A deeply committed Jew, he sought throughout his lifetime to explain the mystique of Jewish existence to his fellow Jews, and to the world at large.

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Out at Shea

Edward Grossman

EX-FOOTBALL STAR Gerald Ford is said to think that Americans are sick of change and that they want to get back to the old virtues. He may be more right than he knows, if the popularity of professional and pick-up baseball is any sign.

This season, some major-league teams drew more spectators than ever. A new attendance record was set in Cincinnati, always a "good" baseball town as they say in the business. Since the Reds made a shambles of the Western Division of the National League, it is not a great wonder that their fans, frequently disappointed in the past, crowded into Riverfront Stadium. The Red Sox cashed in at Fenway Park on the way to winning the American League title, and so did the Phillies, Cardinals, and Pirates, who contended for first place in the National League East. What seems strange in these hard times is that teams like the Dodgers and the Mets, completely out of the running, succeeded in getting more than two million people to part with between two to six dollars apiece for the pleasure of watching the home team play, and lose almost as often as not.

True, things were not rosy everywhere. Some teams and franchises lost money. As has been routine with troubled franchises from the moment the Braves set a precedent by quitting Boston and going to Milwaukee twenty years ago, there will be talk this winter of moving teams to other cities, where, presumably, the fans will be more appreciative. The fact that both the Giants and the A's are talking of moving proves that when it comes to baseball, it is more than a matter of Americans' loving winners and despising losers—the Giants have been sad sacks lately, but across the Bay in Oakland, the A's have been collecting World Championships, and exciting local indifference. Enthusiasm for baseball is not the same in every city. Considering the advanced age of the game and its old-fashioned qualities, it is remarkable that there is much enthusiasm at all.

By rights baseball should be dead, or, at best, a curiosity, a protected species like the bald eagle, subsidized by Congress, symbolizing the more innocent, rambunctious, attractive years of the Republic. Despite newfangled gimmicks and innovations—computerized scoreboards, multicolored doubleknit uniforms, the designated hitter, relentless organ music—it remains a slow, abstruse entertainment compared with football or basketball. Foreigners complain that they can't understand it and that, anyway, nothing happens. Actually, even when a game seems to be idling along, something is always happening, but it is not possible to educate an adult into pleasures so arcane as watching a potbellied third-base coach flashing signs to a .206 hitter at the plate. Henry Kissinger said it before throwing out the ceremonial first ball at this year's All Star game: "Baseball is the most intellectual game because most of the action goes on in your head."

Baseball has claimed its share of intellectuals, but obviously it is a democratic rather than a mandarin passion. It could not have survived otherwise. On any Saturday or Sunday this summer, there were a couple of dozen hardball and softball games being played in Central Park in New York, and the players were ordinary citizens on their day off, with only a sprinkling of professors. These games attracted spectators, who shunned the soccer and touch football games in progress nearby. Despite Pele's debut, soccer still looks foreign, a game for young UN bureaucrats and for new immigrants resisting Americanization. As for the touch football, it was somehow irrelevant, even unattractive, like a sour flashback to scenes in the Kennedy compound at Hyannis. The spectators gathered at the diamonds, and the mobile peanut and ice-cream vendors did their best business there, among the softball groupies lounging on the littered grass, and the old codgers, their pantlegs rolled up, kibitzing and warming their shins in the sun.

The weekend baseball players tended to go at it good-naturedly; the unpopular footballers looked grim. Baseball may be essentially slow and cerebral, but when played by amateurs who are dedicated to the thousand little gestures and rituals of the game, and who are knowledgeable about the rules and the jargon, it is still a recreation that is healthy precisely in the measure that it is hard to take too seriously. The tempo in these games was pleasantly languid, with sudden moments of furious action. The traditional infield chatter—"how you *fire*, Big Daddy"—went on constantly, and it made players and spectators alike smile and relax. In Manhattan, national center of paranoia, these games were like islands of sanity.

AT Shea Stadium, which the Yankees shared with the Mets this season while their hallowed home was being refurbished, the feeling in the air during games was usually friendly—something unusual for sporting events anywhere in the world. The U.S. has long been outclassed in the Ugly Crowd League, but lately it has begun catching up on the international competition. American crowds that used to be merely boisterous have become nasty and dangerous in the last ten years. There were also some incidents of fighting and bottle-throwing at Shea this summer. At most games, there was at least one vocal drunk within earshot. Yet the rioting was comparatively rare and small-scale, and the obscenities actually added to the nice democratic flavor, so long as they came as occasional comments and not in an endless stream.

On a cold, windy, overcast afternoon late in the season, in a game which meant little in the way of final standings to either club, the Mets played the Reds in front of

EDWARD GROSSMAN, *who divides his time between New York and Jerusalem, writes frequently on a variety of social and cultural matters.*

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26,693 paying customers. It was a crowd that only half-filled Shea, but it looked and sounded substantial. The Mets scored first, stayed ahead until the sixth inning, gave away their lead on errors, rallied, and managed to hold on long enough for the game to end before the Reds could wake up. Throughout, the crowd was attentive and congenial. When the Mets were scoring, the shouting was loud and cheerful, and when they were fumbling, the groaning in the grandstand was somewhat theatrical—not really disturbed. It was a happy crowd that headed for the parking lot and the subway after the last out in the ninth, and the fact that the home team had won, though worth mentioning, was probably not the main reason. Nor did it seem to be the fact that a lot of alcohol had been consumed.

Beer is on sale at Shea, and there are police stationed permanently in the aisles around the visiting team's dugout, risking injury from foul balls by keeping their backs to the field and their eyes on the crowd. During this game, the cops seemed unnecessary. Even when Pete Rose, the Reds' perennial All Star, was at bat or on the basepaths, the mood remained nonviolent, although there were plenty of catcalls and Bronx cheers. Rose competes intensely, and he provokes crowds in the various cities around the National League, especially where he has been involved in rough plays. His aggressiveness is typical of one of the classic styles of play, perfected early on by Ty Cobb and adopted later by lesser figures such as Leo Durocher, Alvin Dark, and Don Hoak. When combined with a modicum of natural gifts or acquired skills, this all-out style has its place in a sport where aggression is mostly translated into finesse. Also, the fans like it. At Shea, some of the same fans who booed Rose just for stepping to the plate were capable of applauding him when he made a diving catch of a line-drive in the bottom of the sixth.

Right after this impossible catch, during the seventh-inning stretch, the sun came out and made the outfield grass (which is real at Shea, not plastic) gleam like a meadow in the country. For a couple of minutes, despite the jets that kept coming in directly overhead to land at La Guardia, and despite the anonymous up-to-date architecture of Shea, the scene, with the groundskeepers manicuring the infield and the fans stretching and scratching, gave off a powerful illusion of time arrested on a summer day when things were going better, and the future beckoned. Theoretically, a baseball game can go on forever, yet actually, anyone who thinks about it must admit that the time when baseball or any other sport could accurately be called the National Pastime, has passed. What many of the fans at the ball parks seem to be buying and getting, therefore, is a trace of nostalgic pleasure. This may apply as well to the young, who are not aware of it, as to the old, who have their memories. A stylized "'76" flag flew under the Stars and Stripes in center field at Shea and the other parks all season. An undesirable side-effect of the bicentennial ballyhoo is that it could obscure the real yearning Americans have for a usable, romanticized past. In its way, baseball is ideal, for it answers this need with infinite reenactments of a competitive drama which is far less exciting and hectic, far more soothing, than basketball or football.

INTELLECTUALS have noticed that football is a paradigm of war. As in war, violence is focused by drill and discipline, the point being to use it to destroy the enemy's position on the field, hurt him physically and knock him out, shatter his morale. The individual protagonist, no matter how brilliant, remains faceless under his helmet and armor plating, a cog in a human machine. It is easy to see that the quarterback is the captain screaming orders, the linemen are the infantry, the head coach pacing the sidelines is the general in his bunker.

It is hard to say whether baseball or football is more suited to the American temperament. According to statistics published by the National Football League, eight teams lost money last season, three others made less than $100,000, and overall ticket sales dropped $6.6 million. The football players' union disputes these figures, alleging that they are an excuse to cut salaries. While that may be true, one does get the impression that pro football is overgrown and overpromoted, and that the public's appetite for it is not quite so keen as it was a few years ago.

The same NFL report that shows a falling off in attendance also reveals that television and radio revenues were up $15 million from 1973 (to $59 million), proving, if nothing else, that in the judgment of the media bosses and advertising experts, Americans are still interested in watching football in their living rooms. Indeed, it would be quixotic to expect football to shrivel up and blow away. It caters to an American taste for violence, and it too has its romantic traditions. But its spectacular age of growth, which coincided with the Vietnam war, seems to be over. Significantly, more and more pro football players are being recruited from otherwise undistinguished black colleges. At predominantly white and mixed colleges, though the "Big Men On Campus" are no longer radical politicians as in the 60's, neither are they football stars once more, as in the 50's and before. Collegiate footballers know that they are called animals, and against the grain of their chosen sport they cultivate a certain sensitivity, and long hair.

Among the pros, there are disaffected, articulate dropouts, such as Alex Karras and Dave Meggysey, who make it clear that they think football is stupid and vicious, whether it is played for money or for dear old Yale. Confessions and exposés by ex-baseball players, while often sardonic, never utterly condemn baseball either as a business or a sport—Jim Bouton, for example, wrote fairly fondly of the Yankees even while bringing his ex-teammates down several notches. The books by the football mavericks are bitter, angry, and sharp. They have served to let some air out of a sport whose presiding genius is still the late martinet and head coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi.

It would be tempting to picture

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football in decline and baseball resurgent. Could it be that in the aftermath of a bad war that brought out some of the non-violent as well as the brutal instincts of Americans, football, a blood-sport, has had its day, or, at least, is highly suspect? But it would be as facile and premature to write it off as it would be mean and dim to begrudge the crowds at baseball games the distraction that they are buying themselves.

At the game at Shea, there were blacks and Latins and whites. If Labor Department figures can be believed, unemployment among the whites was about 10 per cent, and among the blacks and Latins, twice that or more. Without a doubt, many of these fans paid for their tickets out of unemployment checks. Those in the majority, who had jobs, also had things they wished, consciously or unconsciously, to forget for an hour or two. In democracies almost as much as in dictatorships, spectator sports are a popular painkiller. When the real news is shameful or ominous, the ordinary newspaper reader can be trusted to turn straight to the sports section. This was evident in public places throughout the past baseball season, which in a sense started in April with the evacuation of the U.S. embassy in Saigon and the front-page photos of Marines pushing Vietnamese off the last helicopters.

Baseball is relatively harmless as opiates go. For a few hours, the classes and ethnic groups are together in the grandstand, and integrated on the playing field (professional baseball is neither as black as football and basketball, nor as white as hockey). Pro baseball players play for keeps, of course, for money and pride, yet this does not overshadow the tolerant and humorous aspects of the game. The players have faces that can be seen and bodies that come in various shapes and sizes. Bruce Kison, pitcher for the Pirates, is skinny; Wilbur Wood and Mickey Lolich, pitchers for the White Sox and Tigers respectively, are fat. Kansas City infielder and base-stealer Freddie Patek is 5 feet, 6 inches, and Mets outfielder Dave Kingman is 6 feet, 7 inches. In baseball, it takes all kinds.

Movies

Man Bites Shark (& Other Curiosities)

William S. Pechter

IF THE fact that *Jaws* has now surpassed the U.S. earnings (it's not yet been released abroad) of any film before tempts one to consider the social significance of its phenomenal success, a little contact with the film itself should put a brake on all such cogitation. To be sure, the film is, in Robert Chappetta's nice phrase, "a stress movie to relieve stress," offering us all a few hours of relaxing diversion in worry about sharks as an escape from worrying about mortgage payments and grocery bills. But depressions and recessions come and go, while an audience's appetite for the horrific has been a fairly steady thing for at least the past few centuries.

At one point in *Jaws*, Richard Dreyfuss (a bit too calculatingly lovable as the film's resident shark expert) describes sharks as "eating machines." *Jaws* is a fright machine, a machine to scare people, much as the previous film by *Jaws'* director, Steven Spielberg (*The Sugarland Express*, with its slick pastiche of everything from *Ace in the Hole* to *Bonnie and Clyde*), was a machine to please critics. The operative word in both cases is "machine"; and nothing—no "irrelevant" detail of incident or character (such as is the lifeblood of any good fiction)—is allowed to interfere with the machine's smooth operation. Still, one can't help being aware that, compared with something like *The Exorcist* (not to say *Psycho* or *The Birds*), the fear here never really strikes anything primal or profound; *Jaws* is essentially an old-fashioned monster movie, son of *Godzilla*, and one's fear is directed not at what will happen next but at when it will happen and to whom—and at what faithfully reproduced, brightly Technicolored bit of gore we'll next have to see (the movie has that bright, clean look characteristic of Bill Butler's photography). Nor, one can't help noticing, does everything run all that smoothly. Structurally, the movie splits a bit too disjointedly down the middle: the first half, a mini-disaster movie about the terrorizing of the beaches; the second, a mini-*Moby-Dick*, with obsessed captain and crew in pursuit of their great white shark. And though Roy Scheider's quietly understated performance provides a solid average-man Ishmael to anchor the audience's empathy and point of view, Robert Shaw's sub-Ahab, with its risible repertory of avast-matey-har-har-har old-salt locutions, is just sufficiently redolent of the smoked hamminess of a Robert Newton to leave me, with my soft spot for the original, longing for the real thing.

Nor is one really quite so compelled as the reviewers claim to admire the mechanical skill and efficiency the film does display. If, owing perhaps to some occupational atrophy of my capacity for moral outrage, I can't get highly exercised about *Jaws*, neither can I warm very much to filmmaking of this essentially manipulative sort, whose sole aim is systematically to reduce one to a quivering mass of ectoplasm. *Jaws* is the very essence of what Brecht characterized as the "culinary" element in modern art, high and low—a mind-numbing repast for sense-sated gluttons. Shark stew for the stupefied.

WATCHING *Jaws*, I was reminded of Pauline Kael's question as to whether a work's being undeniably *exciting* is necessarily the same thing as its being *enjoyable*—a question raised by *Jaws* more aptly, I think, than by *The French Connection*, regarding which she asked it. In any event, neither questions of excitement nor enjoyment are likely to be raised by *French*

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Connection II. Judging from statements he made to the press soon after *French Connection II* opened, John Frankenheimer was both touchy that his film not be taken as a "rip-off" of William Friedkin's original *The French Connection* and eager to take credit for the fact that the new film was breaking some opening-days attendance records. One could understand this: Frankenheimer had had a recent string of box-office flops, and *The Godfather, Part II* has given credence to the idea of a non-exploitative sequel for perhaps the first time since *Bride of Frankenstein*. But it also seemed to me a case of trying to have it both ways, since the fast start of *French Connection II*, whatever its merits, was clearly a ride on the coattails of its predecessor; without the pre-existing audience for more of Popeye Doyle, the original's loutish cop hero, the sequel, based on its own innate qualities, surely wouldn't have achieved anything like its initial popularity (a supposition borne out by the fact of that early audience's evaporation). This might have been creditable if, like *The Godfather, Part II*, it were an instance of a film undertaking to use that ready-made audience for a sequel in order to pull off a work that was more high-minded than might otherwise attract an audience of such size. But the trouble with *French Connection II* is that, in every way that it differs from the original, it's inferior.

Not that *The French Connection* was really such a lofty act to top, though it did zip along with a sprinter's fleet-footedness, and had a certain street-wise hipness in its handling of the New York scene. But Frankenheimer, even at his best, isn't a director notable for a swift pace or light touch, and his tendency to ponderousness isn't helped here by a script that sags badly in the middle.

What's worse, however, is that *French Connection II is* high-minded in a low-grade sort of way. One sees this in the film's attempt to "humanize" Popeye, to make him undergo some suffering at the end of which his obsessive pursuit of "Frog One," the head man who escaped him in the first film (again played by Fernando Rey, on vacation from his steady employment in Buñuel films), is given a more explicit motivation, and even a justification. This is accomplished by having Popeye captured by the Frenchman's gang, hooked on heroin so as to be pumped for information, then overdosed and left for dead only to be found and pulled through, cold turkey, by the police in that aforementioned sagging middle. (This section also allows Frankenheimer to indulge that morbid streak one sees throughout his work, most overtly in *Seconds*.) The Popeye who emerges chastened from this ordeal (and from another in which he's almost drowned) has attained a newfound status as an avenging angel.

What Frankenheimer and his writers have failed to perceive, however, is that Popeye had already been given all the motivation he needs, since his motivation is so thoroughly externalized in the brilliant performance by Gene Hackman in part one, which Hackman repeats in part two as far as the script allows him. Hackman's Doyle wasn't just the cartoonish boor of Peter Boyle's Joe, but a creation which captured everything from the barely suppressed, boiling rage to the sly cunning, even the wittiness, of the man; and even his slightest gesture fully convinced us that he was someone who would act in exactly this way. (It was Hackman's creation, putting one in mind of Konrad Lorenz's observation that man is the missing link between apes and human beings, that gave the earlier film whatever complexity it had.) Popeye isn't "corrupt": he's an "honest" cop, eating pizza slices in cold doorways while his quarry dines in fine restaurants; yet the havoc he wreaks makes one wonder whether it wouldn't be better for everyone if, like everyone else, he were on the take. His real corruption is his vigilantism: his one-man war (so much a product of New York's stratified society) not so much on lawbreakers but on the Haves by one of the Have-nots.

One sees Popeye's corruption—and his psychosis—most clearly in the deliberately bewildering ending of the first film, when, Frog One having eluded him, Popeye lunges about dementedly, shooting at shadows (after which, end-titles inform us that all the big people got away, the little people—including Popeye himself—got nailed, and the seized narcotics were stolen from police headquarters). This ending doesn't follow organically from what's gone before—it's tacked on, and a bit of nihilistic chic to boot—but it does end the film with a kicker, and enables it, like a *Patton*, to appeal equally to anyone who can enjoy the spectacle of a cop bullying blacks (he goes after another in the sequel), and to the cop-hating audience as well.

The intention of *French Connection II* in motivating Popeye may be to aim for something more elevated, but one sees its simple-minded results in the fact that, when Popeye finally gets his man and shoots Frog One at the end of this sequel, the audience (at least, the large audience with which I saw the film) cheers. Moreover, by the time this happens, Popeye (whom the sequel uproots from his New York-jungle element and plunks down in Marseilles where his style can be contrasted with that of the French police for *McCloud*-like laughs) has become not only the instrument of righteous vengeance, but positively lovable: cantankerous but cute, a bone-crunching Archie Bunker.

And it's this which worries me most of all. For though this film purports to be the first one's "climax," I get the definite sense from it that Popeye's been softened up for his re-emergence as a national folk hero, eventually with perhaps no more than his cryptic line about "picking your feet in Poughkeepsie" to remind us of his connection with the rock-hard original. Whatever my reservations about *The Godfather, Part II*, it was clear that Coppola, to his credit, had taken his materials to their exhaustion: nobody, one felt, could ever again do anything further with the Corleones (except endlessly reshape the existing footage). But though we've probably seen the last of Hackman and Frankenheimer and even Frog One in this affair, *French Connection II* leaves me with a sinking feeling that we're being set up for yet the further adventures of Popeye Doyle, America's favorite thug with a badge,

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moving from one colorful locale to the next as he traverses his very own planet of the apes.

If *Popeye Takes a Trip* does make it as a series, it will be without any help from a pilot like *French Connection II*, and despite the fact that the wave of cop movies which crested with the original *French Connection* seems (apart from television) to have gone with the Nixon-Agnew, law-and-order wind. But if cops are out, private eyes are very much in, their new vogue owing something, perhaps, to the current hero-worship of the figure of the investigative reporter. And so, while Robert Redford stars in *All the President's Men*, his erstwhile buddy, Paul Newman, returns as Lew Harper, whom Newman first played in *Harper* nine years ago. I went to *The Drowning Pool* with expectations formed from *Harper*, which is to say, expecting the worst, which probably helped. *The Drowning Pool* does open with a cutely facetious, *Harper*-like sequence and closes with a dumb, *Harper*-like freeze frame, but, in between, though it travels its well-worn grooves with utter predictability, it seemed to me surprisingly enjoyable, and the mere transplantation from California to Louisiana does wonders in giving the private-eye clichés a new lease on life. Gordon Willis's darkly handsome location camera work is a definite plus, and the director, Stuart Rosenberg, stays out of the way, and thus doesn't contribute his usual minus. Even Paul Newman seems to muster more conviction than usual.

I had no high expectations of *Night Moves* either, having disliked almost everything about the previous work of its director, Arthur Penn; yet *Night Moves* genuinely is what *The Drowning Pool* isn't for a second: namely, interesting. I gather that Penn considers *Night Moves*—a project initiated prior to his involvement with it—a more compromised, less personal work than some of his previous films: one which finds him working slightly under wraps. But Penn is one of those directors whose being kept under wraps is all to his work's advantage.

The Drowning Pool fills in a three-dimensional setting, and puts its one-dimensional hero down in the middle of it. In the middle of *Night Moves*, even when the film itself occasionally falls flat, is the three-dimensional figure of its protagonist, Harry Moseby: a private detective whose choice of vocation bears a complicated relation to his emotional makeup and his troubled past, and who's unable to disentangle his work from his crumbling marriage; a man capable of describing the experience of seeing an Eric Rohmer film as being "like watching paint dry," and an ex-college-football star who can reply (in a portent of the film's pessimism) when he's asked who's winning a game on television, "Nobody. One side's just losing slower than the other." The lines, of course, come from Alan Sharp's distinctively flavored script. But though one tends to talk readily of scripts, films, and their directors, the sense of a psychologically complex character capable of such feelings and perceptions comes, above all, from the performance of Gene Hackman as that character, a performance as fine as it is different from Hackman's Popeye Doyle or Harry Caul (in *The Conversation*), and his other work before and since. For all the emphasis on films and their luminary directors, Hackman's work has become, like Jack Nicholson's, a far better reason for going lately to see a movie than who directed it.

But, finally, there is this film, and its director, and its director's ambition that it be something more important than merely an intelligent detective thriller; an ambition one sees less in the film's nuanced and moody first half than in its flawed and floundering second. For, like Jake Gittes in *Chinatown*, Harry Moseby doesn't solve his case, but only gets in deeper. In the end, his marriage as shaky as ever and the wreckage of his case strewn around him, he lies helplessly wounded in a boat as it drifts aimlessly in circles in the middle of the ocean.

Luckily, it wasn't until after I'd seen *Night Moves* that I read in an interview with Penn that Harry's plight was intended as a metaphor for post-Watergate America, and Harry himself was meant to be seen as an utterly unsympathetic instance of the American character's spiritual failure and lack of inward turning. (Even the comment on Rohmer—which, especially given that it exempts *My Night at Maud's*, seems to me as felicitous a characterization of Rohmer's work as any I know—is meant, it turns out, only to indicate Harry's boorish insensitivity.) I say "luckily" because, had I been aware of such statements of intention before seeing the film, I might have disliked it; reading them afterward, I can still like the film, and just continue to dislike Penn. For—luckily—Hackman's performance does turn the film around. Nevertheless, the main problem with the overreaching of Penn's conception is that *Night Moves* just isn't good enough as a private-detective thriller to be more than a private-detective thriller: it's one thing to manage, via a *Chinatown*'s complex but ultimately lucid plot, to land one's protagonist in what one might call a metaphysical muddle, and quite another to end in a muddle because of the muddled mis-management of one's materials. In the end, Harry Moseby seems less to fall through a hole in his universe than to fall through the holes in the plot.

I WENT to *Farewell, My Lovely* expecting to enjoy it, which proved to be yet another mistake. I'd enjoyed the off-the-wall humor of director Dick Richard's previous film, *Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins*—a trifle, to be sure, but no less a trifle (and a better one) than such things as *Hearts of the West* and *Smile*, which get shown at film festivals. At the least, *Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins* was alive. I've heard that two critics who usually disagree on just about everything have independently described *Farewell, My Lovely* as "embalmed," and though that's a somewhat more charitable word than any which occurred to me while I watched the film, I suppose it's as good as any to characterize *Farewell, My Lovely*'s musty antiquarianism. Perhaps I'd have been in a less uncharitable mood if my memory of *Murder, My Sweet*, the previous filming of the Raymond Chandler novel, had been less

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clear. Generally, I find it as uninteresting and arid an exercise to lambaste a film's remake for its differences from the original as to go after a film for its departures from a book on which it's based (and I don't regard *Murder, My Sweet* as anything great—though it's great fun—to begin with). But, in this case, one can hardly help noticing that, in every respect in which the two films can be compared, the old one is strikingly superior.

And I don't mean things like how much better Claire Trevor and Mike Mazurki were than Charlotte Rampling and Jack O'Halloran (who looks right, but is inert) in the roles of the newly genteel Mrs. Grayle and her old boy friend, Moose Malloy, but rather that it was possible in the earlier film, since one could still see the flashy tramp beneath the veneer of "respectability" in Trevor's Mrs. Grayle, to believe in their one-time pairing. But there's no way that O'Halloran's Neanderthal hulk and Rampling's svelte mannequin can be imagined as anything but preposterous as a couple, no matter how far back in their past one tries to imagine them. And though Mitchum, too, looks great in the part of Marlowe, his performance seemed to me to outstrip (and arguably to the point of diminishing returns) any he's given previously as an essay in minimalism. While, in the earlier film, Dick Powell (Chandler's own favorite among the screen's several Marlowes, though he once said he'd envisioned Cary Grant in the role) was nothing short of superb.

But the curious thing is that, while the remake hews (in story line) a good deal closer to the original novel, the actual effect now of such things as the crooked cops, civic corruption, murders dismissed as "just another shine killing," and involvement of a judge described as the "most powerful political figure in Los Angeles" is, almost inevitably, that of imitating *Chinatown* (an effect emphasized by the new film's copy of *Chinatown*'s music). And given the slavish attempt to recreate a 40's-private-eye movie down to the last detail, there's a peculiar time-warp effect in the Marlowe of 1941 or '42 becoming one of the new breed of "old and tired" heroes for no better reason, it seems, than that of tailoring the part to Mitchum's actual age. (One is reminded of Elliott Gould seeming, conversely, too young for the anachronistic Marlowe of *The Long Goodbye*.) Yet, finally, that slavishness is what's fatal: *Farewell, My Lovely* does attempt to be that perfect copy, that "20th-century *Brandenburg Concerto*," whose impossibility I spoke of when reviewing *Chinatown*.* For even if one's only concessions to a contemporary point of view are an updating of period and (as in *The Drowning Pool*) change in locale, one can't treat these materials as though, for thirty years, time has stood still and nothing has changed. Rex Reed says *Farewell, My Lovely* deserves to be housed in a museum with *The Big Sleep*. I say: storm the barricades, and rescue *The Big Sleep* from the museums. As for *Farewell, My Lovely*, a mausoleum would be more like it.

Born to Kill seems to fit so snugly and inconspicuously on the marquee with *Big Bad Mama, Fists of Fury*, and the other titles which compose the triple features in those grind houses (that haven't yet gone porno) found clustered in any big city's downtown that one hesitates to single the film out, as though to do so might be an act of cruelty, like reminding a derelict of what he might have been or giving him false expectations of rising socially. *Born to Kill* is what it is—but is it? Look a little closer, and you begin to notice things: like the fact that it was photographed by Nestor Almendros, the man who shot the last three films of Eric Rohmer and Truffaut's *The Wild Child* and *Two English Girls*; or that its slightly oddball cast includes both Troy Donahue (used here before Coppola cast him in *The Godfather, Part II*) and Millie Perkins (George Stevens's dud discovery for *The Diary of Anne Frank*), two of the most *echt* artifacts of 50's ephemerality. Nose about a little more, and you may even learn that the previous project of *Born to Kill*'s director was based on a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet, and that his last film before that, *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971), a "youth" movie made at the peak of the late-60's-early-70's "youth-movie" boom, had been touted before its opening as a phenomenon destined to become the "ultimate" movie.

The director is Monte Hellman, usually described as a "cult" director, though his cult would be difficult to identify or locate. I liked *Two-Lane Blacktop*—in fact, I admired it greatly—but when I reviewed it† I spoke of the futility I felt in recommending a film like it—a laconic account of a pair of drag racers (played by a pair of pop-music stars) as they drift cross country—in COMMENTARY. Recommending Hellman's new film—an account of a bird-trainer traveling the Southern cockfighting circuit—would probably be an even more futile exercise, and I'm not sure, in any case, I'd want to. Actually, insofar as my recommendation of Hellman's earlier film made it sound attractively casual, I now feel I was being somewhat disingenuous: Hellman's work, seen from one angle, can strike the viewer in this way, but, seen from another, it seems as tightly organized and formally controlled as that of an Antonioni; and, indeed, rather as with one of those novelty post cards whose picture changes as one tilts it, one's impressions of Hellman's films seem continuously to oscillate between the poles of offhandedness and rigor.

One reason this is more clear to me now is that I hadn't, when I saw *Two-Lane Blacktop*, seen any of Hellman's other work, and now, in addition to *Born to Kill*, I've caught up with his pair of 1965 Westerns, *The Shooting* and *Ride in the Whirlwind*. (Both are showing up again on the strength of their featuring early appearances by Jack Nicholson, who also wrote the latter; Hellman's other films are *The Beast from Haunted Cove*, made for Roger Corman in 1959, and *Back Door to Hell* and *Flight to Fury*, both made in 1964 in the Philippines.) These Westerns form, I suppose, the basis for the Hellman cult, especially the former, with its script by Adrien Joyce (who subsequently wrote *Five Easy Pieces* and *The Fortune*) full of

* "Everyman in Chinatown," September 1974.

† "Youth, Manhood, Middle Age," January 1972.

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deliberately enigmatic narrative obfuscations, and "mythic" aspirations. Though Hellman's dry, reserved direction plays these things down, the film, after a splendid opening, suffers badly from them, and suffers also from Jack Nicholson's miscasting as a black-clad master gunfighter and Millie Perkins's blankness as a would-be woman of mystery. But *Ride in the Whirlwind* seems to me wholly extraordinary. There's hardly a plot to speak of—three cowhands find themselves in the vicinity of some outlaws when a posse closes in, are mistaken for, forced to flee like, and eventually become hunted outlaws themselves—yet for all the revisionist, way-it-really-was Westerns of recent years, the film leaves one feeling that one has never elsewhere seen a depiction of the West in films with such unhistrionic verisimilitude and authenticity. What the film reminds one of is less other Westerns than Vittorio De Seta's great semi-documentary portrayal of the inexorable cycle of Sardinian poverty and outlawry in *Bandits of Orgosolo*.

Born to Kill isn't as good as *Ride in the Whirlwind* and *Two-Lane Blacktop*. Like *The Shooting*, it seems at odds with its script, though in a different way—rather more like Nicholas Ray's attempt to make a *Heart of Darkness* out of Budd Schulberg's conservationist tract in *Wind Across the Everglades*. Not that one sees this at once, or even throughout most of the film's unfolding; instead, one is aware only of that "seamlessness" I spoke of when reviewing *Two-Lane Blacktop*, the director never for a moment tipping his hand, pointing up a meaning, "interpreting." To the extent *Born to Kill* remains this—a genre study of life on the Southern cockfighting circuit—it is interesting, but not compelling, with its main pleasures to be found in its idiosyncratic detail, and, above all, in Hellman's style: that lean, terse style which may superficially resemble but is in fact entirely different from the rhetorical deadpan of *Badlands* to which Pauline Kael has likened it, reminding me rather of the cool, spare prose of Hemingway's best short stories. But one continually wonders what, if anything, Hellman finds of compelling interest in these materials, where he stands in relation to them—especially when the principals' earnestly idealistic vying for the "cockfighter-of-the year" medal seems to echo the clichés of other sports films with inadvertently comic effect (given that cockfighting is a "sport" distinguished not only by its brutality, but by the fact that, unlike bullfighting, neither of the combatants is a man but are only birds—described as being nature's "most stupid creature but most intelligent fighter").

And then, in the film's last few minutes, something explosive happens, something which may not redeem the film (it comes too late for that) but nevertheless makes one re-see all of it in a different light. What that something is, I wouldn't want to say (both not to give it away, and because to describe it would entail describing too much of what's gone before), but it's an act—charged with a shocking and disturbing sexuality—that suddenly opens up the sexual implications of the "cockfighting" subject, the twisted and obsessive *machismo* of its participants. And the act is followed by some words which make one realize, just as suddenly, that the film's protagonist is utterly mad. And, with this, one realizes also that, far more so than a number of recent, highly-touted "visions" of America in films, *Born to Kill* is getting at something deeply ingrained in and peculiar to American culture: some persistent and pathological linkage in it of sex and violence.

Earlier, I spoke of how comfortably *Born to Kill*'s title seemed to fit on the marquee with those of the other exploitation movies; in fact, though the title may have seemed at home in such company, the picture (which was originally named *Cockfighter*, and then unsuccessfully test-marketed as *Wild Drifter* and *Gamblin' Man* before ending up with its current title) didn't, and, even for the low-budget movie it is, it's turned out to be a financial failure. In this, too, it's of a piece with Hellman's earlier work. Only once did he shoot a film, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, on a relatively big budget (relative to his other films, that is, though quite modest by most current standards); it flopped, and it seems safe to say he'll never get an opportunity to shoot on a budget of such size again. (Hellman was originally to direct *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, but, with Hellman as director, the project couldn't be financed; perhaps Hellman—who's one of Peckinpah's favorite directors—could have coped with the script's portentous clichés more effectively than Peckinpah did.)

In saying this, I don't mean to sentimentalize Hellman's situation as being that of a young filmmaker whom success has so far eluded and who only needs one lucky break to make it. Rather, Hellman seems to me a filmmaker whose films are inherently unpopular, limited to a minority audience; and the miracle is that (since he's able to work on and doesn't need more than a low budget) he's so far managed, more or less, to keep working. Both Bergman and Buñuel have, on separate occasions, spoken of the attractiveness to them of the idea of an art of film created not by directorial celebrities but by nameless contributors, like the builders of medieval cathedrals; Hellman's career probably comes closer than that of any other director I can think of to embodying this ideal of creative anonymity. Given an industry in which a *Jaws* reigns supreme at the very top, it's reassuring to think of a Monte Hellman continuing to toil, with intelligence, individuality, and integrity, at the very bottom.

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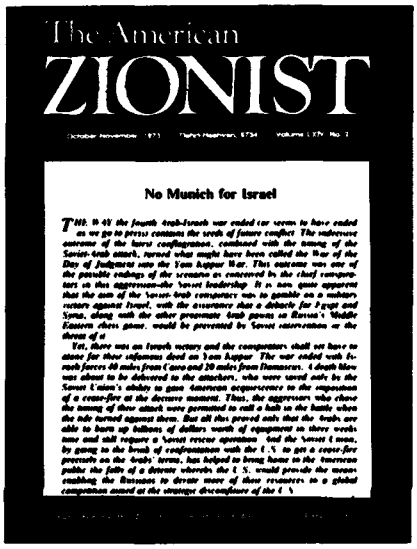

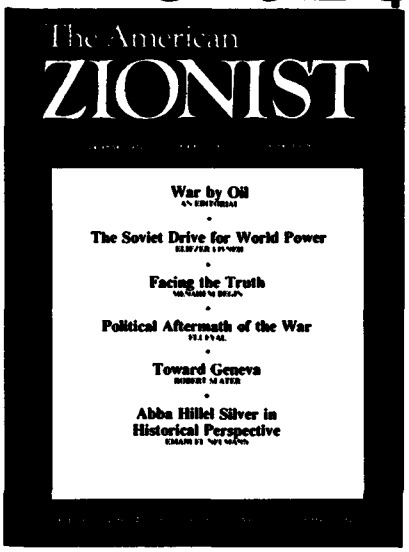

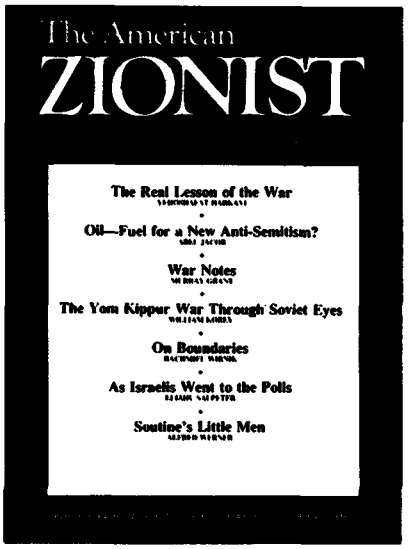

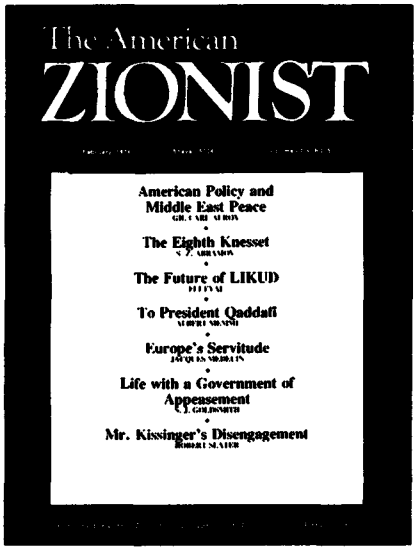

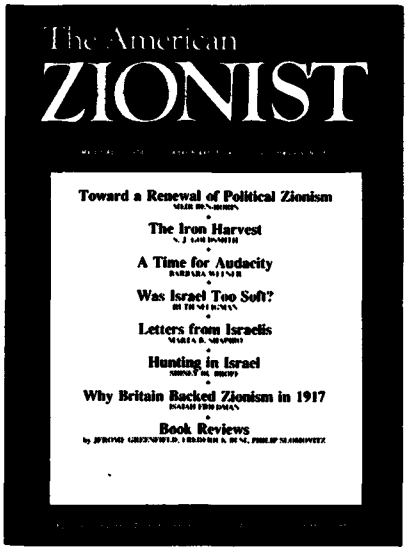

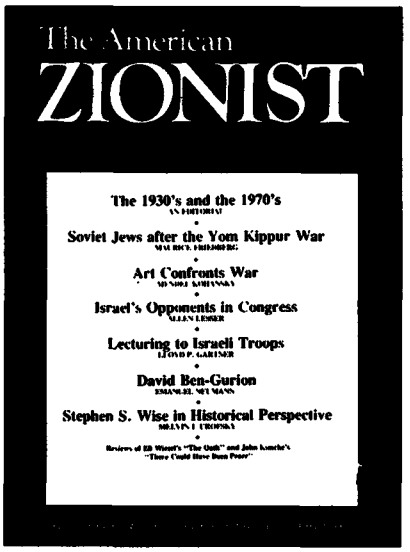

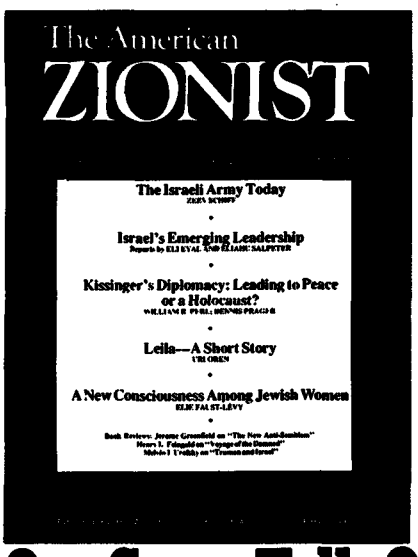

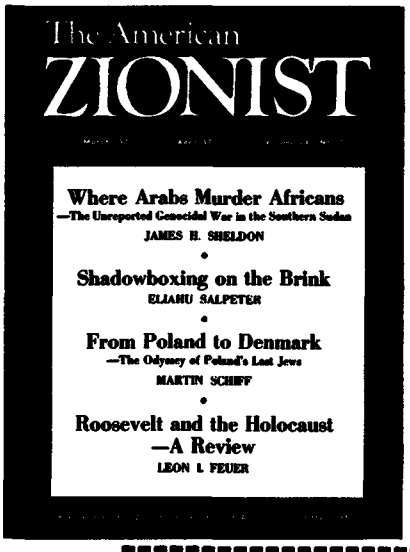

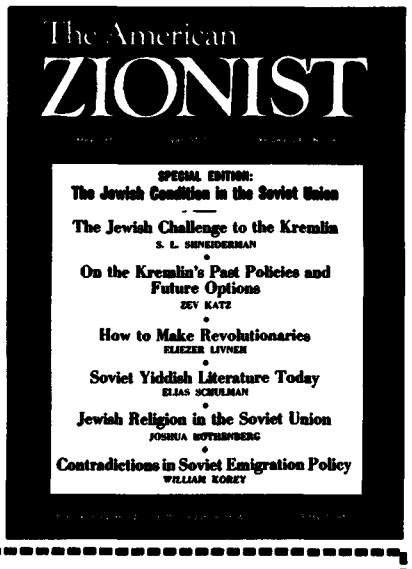

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Books in Review

A Burnt-Out Case

HUMBOLDT'S GIFT. By SAUL BELLOW. *Viking. 487 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by JACK RICHARDSON

FREE style and fixed categories, will and idea, mental geography and urban reality, *odi et amo*, the heart's reasons and the mind's imperatives, carnal compulsion and theoretical need, *member virilis* versus *mens cogitans*—these are only a few of the antitheses, some the author's, some my own distillations, that come to mind when one thinks back upon the books that Saul Bellow has written during the last three decades. *Dangling Man*, the title of his first novel, could serve as a collective description of his heroes: the Hendersons, Herzogs, Wilhelms, Sammlers, all swinging on delicate threads of reason between opposing truths and immiscible realities. The contradictions close in, the string is cut, and the novels become arenas of desperate struggle, filled with events that, like feral predators, stalk Bellow's characters in their times of vulnerability, refusing to be disciplined by thought or tamed by affection, capricious, cruel, and comic appetities whetted only further by efforts to understand them.

When, some years ago, I wrote that Bellow's novels "do not so much end as wear themselves out," I was describing his formal handling of these conflicts, the novelistic method of qualification, speculation, and cultural gloss with which he, through his characters, battles the rambunctious events of his narrative and tries to effect between the gritty details of naturalism and the generalities of an imaginative intelligence some sort of stylistic agreement. I intended this description of exhaustion both as an observation that Bellow often seemed not to trust the conventions of fiction and as an appreciation of what he was able to achieve by refusing the temptation of neat narrative resolutions. He, his characters, and the readers struggled on to the very end, grappling with ironies and complexities that spilled well over the boundaries of his fiction. And if such struggles often made for a ragged, disjointed aesthetic experience, they also infused Bellow's novels with a vitality and intelligence that were unique in American fiction.

After *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, one wondered how the struggle would continue. Arthur Sammler, after all, the disinterested, seventy-year-old cultural consciousness, survivor of the Holocaust, a revenant of intellectual history who takes short views and eschews explanations, is as extreme an example of theoretical fatigue as it is possible to put in human form. He moves among his dying and lunatic relatives like a compassionate spectator, honoring obligations of feeling and conduct as though they were functional necessities, rituals of self-preservation engaged in for the sake of an incomprehensible duty to life. Around him he observes the cluttered humanity of New York; ugliness, desperation, crime, the imbecile cults of fashion catch his attention as, avoiding dog droppings, he walks and rides through the streets of the city. But he has seen and known too much to be moved, shocked, or angered by them. Reflections on the destiny of his species cause no more than brief flurries of bemused melancholy and an occasional feeling of pity he knows is most likely misplaced.

Having dug, alongside his wife, the ditch that was meant to be their own grave and that of a hundred other Jews; having heard the shots of his own execution and tumbled into dirt and death; having then realized that he alone was alive among the corpses and having clawed his way instinctively back into life, where, as a partisan, he would kill not only faceless enemies but also a man in whom he saw the terrible details of humanity—having experienced such absolutes of horror, Sammler cannot now be truly startled by any human action, and there is no organization of thought that can offer him a consistent summation of human life. That Sammler still thinks at all about such matters seems, like his feelings and Old World manners, to be the result of old habits of mental civility, a courteous way of taking leave of his planet. And yet, just as it seems that Arthur Sammler is the personification of a demoded culture, of life lived by keeping up appearances that no longer matter to anyone, Bellow brings him back to earth and human meaning, and in the end Sammler must face the fact that neither death nor flights to other worlds, neither Holocaust nor absurd daily passions, can free him from attachment to his belief, or rather to his knowledge, that the acts of the human species are of significant consequence. Standing over the body of his nephew, a man whose life had been the normal mixture of kind acts and selfish purpose, Sammler delivers a eulogy that ends:

> He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet—through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding—he did meet the terms of his contract. The terms which, in his inmost heart, each man knows. As I know mine. As all know. For that is the truth of it—that all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know.

Thus Sammler admits there is a covenant involved in human existence and a knowledge of the manner in which it must be kept. His labors are bent upon justifying the covenant's terms and the pain they cause, on making the bargain acceptable to mortal feelings. Thought and theory are not then voyages of discovery, but rather attempts at compassionate demonstrations of the necessary justice in the intuited imperatives of life. By

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JACK RICHARDSON *is our regular theater critic. His essay, "Looking Back at 'The Waste Land,'" appeared in August.*

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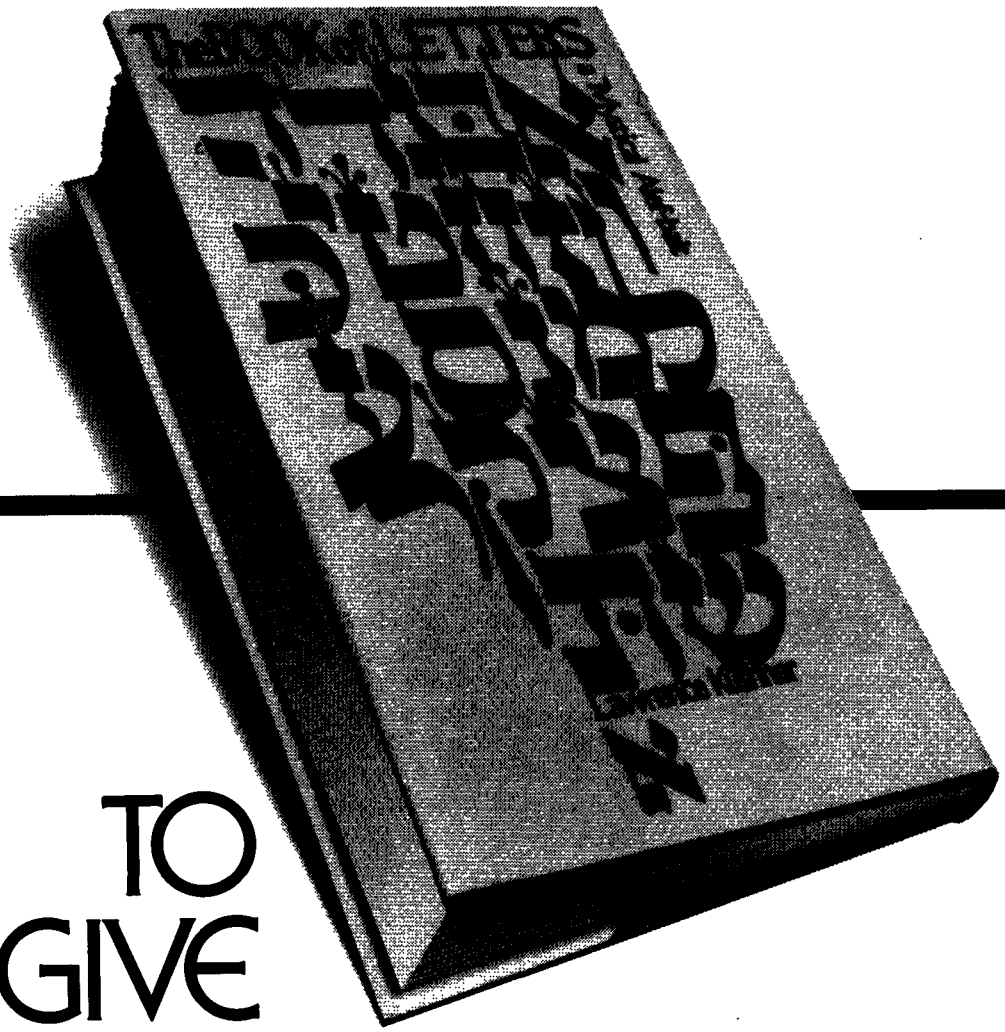

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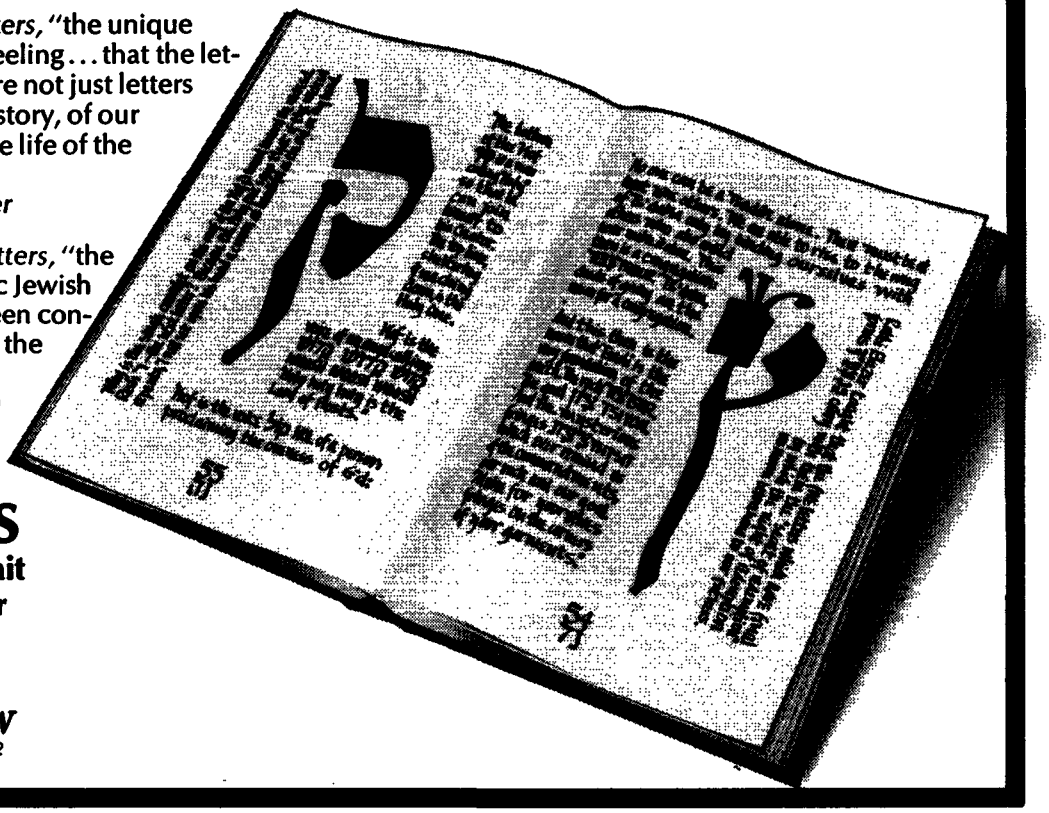

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admitting such knowledge, Sammler affirms and ennobles the attempts of the Herzogs and Hendersons to reconcile this awareness of human purpose with the errant, disconnected data of their personal lives.

Mr. Sammler's Planet is a refined tribute to the struggle between human consciousness and the accidental life of passion, between the philosopher's need to justify and the novelist's duty to depict. With *Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow still affects the zest and seriousness of these old combats, but his arena has become much smaller, his spectacles more contrived, and his adversaries affected with a commonplace exhaustion before their contests even begin. I am told that there is a good deal of autobiography in this novel and this may explain Bellow's reluctance to give the protagonist of *Humboldt's Gift* any of the intellectual strength and interesting human virtue that offset the frequent tone of self-pity and social petulance in his earlier central characters. But the fact that Humboldt is modeled after the poet Delmore Schwartz or that Bellow's involvement in the founding of *The Noble Savage* had circumstances in common with the attempts of his narrator-hero, Charles Citrine, to start a magazine called *The Ark*, is extraneous to criticism. Whether Bellow has been harsh on himself or on the materials of pure imagination, he has written a book that tries to bully and bustle the reader into a point of view about the artist and society that is a mixture of antic exaggeration and simplistic *parti pris*. *Humboldt's Gift* is a sad, shallow book, a statement of intellectual and artistic surrender that has as its only interesting quality that crude sense of humor a writer can sometimes wring out of the wilful abasement of his characters.

The narrator of this capitulation, Charles Citrine, does, I admit, occupy a rare position in our society. He is a successful *homme de lettres*, a historian and cultural critic who's lived quite well for a long time on the earnings of his writings alone. A hit Broadway play began his financial independence, but his serious work has also helped put him in the 50 per-cent bracket and, at the same time, earned him the esteem of the intellectual community he once dreamed of joining but from which he now lives apart, an aloof Chicago exile as disdainful of the cliques, fashions, and Grub Street conventions of New York as he is unneedful of the academic post that usually helps writers of his seriousness to live with some comfort while they produce their well-received and quickly remaindered books.

At sixty, Citrine has achieved as much as possible in the way of worldly goods from his career, and his personal life, while containing an impending divorce and a voluptuous mistress half his age, runs smoothly enough, protected by his money and reputation from any rude shocks or intrusions.

Then, suddenly, everything cracks apart. A petty gangster named Cantabile, furious that Citrine has stopped payment on a check given to cover losses at poker (Cantabile had cheated), clubs Citrine's Mercedes-Benz into a shapeless wreck in order to force an honoring of the debt. Citrine submits, and is subjected to repeated humiliations. Next, Citrine begins to be drained by his divorce: lawyers swindle him, judges appear to take a malevolent joy in indenturing him to his wife's fantasies about his wealth—indeed, the entire legal system seems disposed to treat him as an imbecile or a criminal, as someone who in either case deserves to be taught the hard lessons of the practical world. Finally, he is duped by his partner in *The Ark*, lectured but not helped financially by a millionaire brother he visits and sees through a delicate heart operation, and used and then abandoned by his mistress.

Is this then a portrait of the intellectual as *schlemiel*, as the comic victim of society, the pathetic woolgatherer whose comeuppance is inevitable and somehow correct? On

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one level, Citrine's story does seem a simple parable of ants and grasshoppers, of the stock reckoning between the *Luftmensch* and reality. However, Bellow also intends us to see a deeper meaning and to perceive an ironic justice in Citrine's tribulations, a justness of which Citrine himself is even aware.

This brings us to Humboldt, the brilliant poet and intellectual whom Citrine, as a young man, set out to meet after reading his book of poems. Humboldt was a man filled with intellectual exuberance, intoxicated by the possibilities of art and thought, a poet with New World energy and insight. Gradually, however, the opposing pulls of poetry and worldly ambition began to wear him down. Spending more and more effort on outwitting the system of grants, fellowships, and tenure, feeling that his work was losing its original force, finally discerning acts of personal betrayal everywhere, Humboldt sank into madness. Years later, Citrine sees him, broken and disheveled, standing on a street corner in New York. He turns away from his former mentor and hurries back into the world of success and comfort his own career has offered to him.

WHAT are we to make of Humboldt's fate and its relation to Citrine's? Is Humboldt really such a pure symbol of creative mind that his end can be turned into a dark generality about the artist's destiny in our society? Was his genius so nobly evident that to betray its impossible demands, as Citrine thinks he's done, means a betrayal of the best in life and a defeat without the dignity of honest battle?

Bellow seems to think that Humboldt does possess such significant qualities, but unfortunately he has not found a way of demonstrating his conviction to the reader. Here is one of his attempts:

> Humboldt started by talking about the place of art and culture in the first Stevenson administration—his role, *our* role, for we were going to make hay together. . . . Then he went back to Ike, and the peacetime life of professional soldiers in the 30's.

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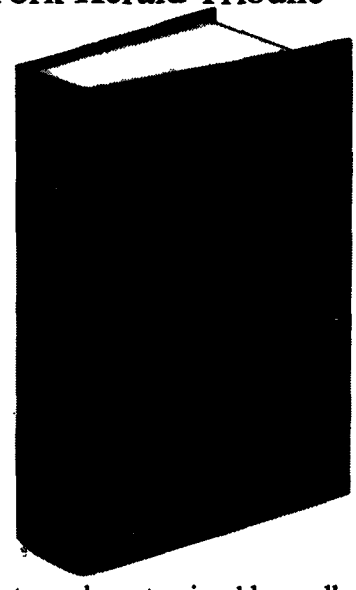

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. . . Security measures in the male brothels of New York. Alcoholism and homosexuality. The married and domestic lives of pederasts. Proust and Charlus. . . . Late at night Humboldt read military history and war memoirs. He knew Wheeler-Bennett, Chester Wilmot, Liddell Hart, Hitler's generals. He also knew Walter Winchell and Earl Wilson . . . and he moved easily from the tabloids to General Rommel and from Rommel to John Donne and T.S. Eliot. . . . He was filled with gossip and hallucination as well as literary theory. Distortion was inherent, yes, in all poetry. But which came first? This rained down on me, part privilege, part pain, with illustrations from the classics and the sayings of Einstein and Zsa Zsa Gabor, with references to Polish socialism and the football tactics of George Halas and the secret motives of Arnold Toynbee and (somehow) the used-car business.

This is the way, Bellow says, that Humboldt "sang himself in and out of madness." But when is he in, and when out? What is there about Humboldt's conversation that distinguishes it from the usual Greenwich Village garrulity *circa* 1950? Very little, if we are not given the specific connections that his mind made between Toynbee and used cars. The parenthetical "somehow" will not do; it is the callow aside by which a writer excuses himself from a commitment to the character he is trying to shape.

Citrine, though aware of Humboldt's contribution to his own doom, nevertheless feels that in his own cautious, sober achievement of success he has denied an important truth in Humboldt's life just as he denied the reality of his presence on the New York street. As he begins to be socially destroyed by the novel's events and characters—both of which Bellow creates in overblown, dramatically improbable ways—he perceives that there was something apposite in Humboldt's madness and death in a Broadway flophouse, something that pervades the social destiny of even the most cautious artist or intellectual in America. And more than this, Citrine does not even feel any longer that it matters much whether Humboldt's vision has a place in the world. Art, the conation of the mind, seem empty causes as death approaches and his private world disintegrates. He abandons a long-planned essay on boredom, and muses over the theosophical writings of Rudolf Steiner.

In the end, Citrine is rescued, with heavy-handed irony, from some of his financial distress. But by then he has learned too much about his incompetence and failures to think of doing anything more than contemplating peaceful states of being beyond the reach of human thought and passion. A burnt-out case, drifting into cosmic views, Charles Citrine will neither be missed nor mourned by those of us who stay behind on Sammler's planet.

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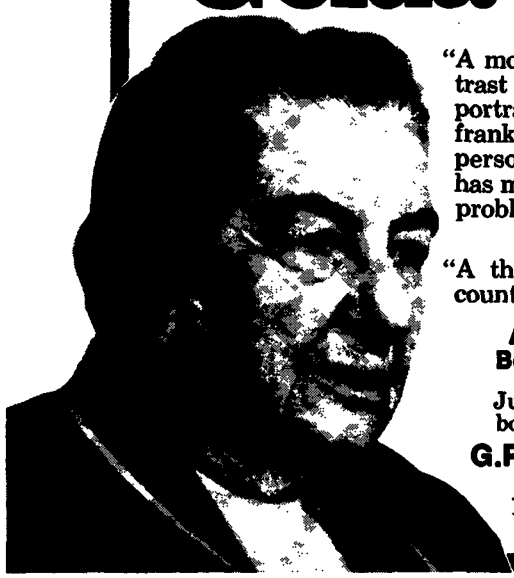

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Loyalties of Empire

THE IMPERIAL ACHIEVEMENT: THE RISE AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE. By JOHN BOWLE. *Little, Brown. 484 pp. $15.00.*

AN INDIAN SUMMER. By JAMES CAMERON. *McGraw-Hill. 224 pp. $7.95.*

WHO KILLED THE BRITISH EMPIRE? By GEORGE WOODCOCK. *Quadrangle. 356 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by MARTIN GREEN

IT SEEMS to have occurred to a number of writers during the last decade that the dissolution of the British empire—and, by extension, its formation and career—still deserves discussion, explanation, or plain description. At the time, the empire was too large and obvious to be seen, too various and complex to

MARTIN GREEN, *whose works include* The von Richthofen Sisters *and* Cities of Light and Sons of the Morning, *is professor of English at Tufts University.*

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be grasped. To me, growing up, the British empire was a large fact of every map I looked at, of school history courses, of political rhetoric and official occasions; but it was also, really, not a fact at all. None of "my" sources mentioned it: you do not gather from reading D. H. Lawrence, or George Eliot, or F. R. Leavis, that England owned an empire. And so nowadays I read about it with discovery and amazement in books like those under review.

Of the three, John Bowle's book is the least interesting for its character. It stands by its contents, which are presented in orthodox chronological units, subdivided by continents, and with minimal overt ideology. It is stronger on the dominions than on the colonies, and on the imperial role of the Scots than on that of the Bantu, but it is above all a standard historical work. "The new sense of geopolitics," Bowle writes, which shows us the physical and climatic facts behind commerce, settlement, and conquest, means that "political history written in terms of imperialist pride or post-colonial resentment is on its way out." Well, we have heard that before—the end of ideology is like the perpetual-motion machine.

In fact, *The Imperial Achievement* is permeated throughout with a discreet and disguised imperialism, which manifests itself in various stylistic forms, most notably the aesthetic prose of romantic militarism: "As the monsoon mist lifted over the green plains of Bengal, the 39th Foot and the Sepoys broke up the Nawab's Persian and Pathan guard. Under the English fire the elephants panicked. . . ." The general sense of history is simply conservative. Bowle dismisses the notion that there were two nations, the rich and the poor, in 19th-century England, and he blames the Labour government of 1945 for undermining England's resilience and initiative with taxes and bureaucracy. The book's bland "objectivity" turns out to be not quite so objective as it might have been.

Bowle's academic sobriety is matched by James Cameron's journalistic inebriation in *An Indian Summer*. Cameron is inquisitive and irreverent about everything, though about England his irreverence is bored, while about India it is angry, loving, alive. The drunkenness is ideological; his taste runs to paradoxes and confusions, incomprehensibilities and incompatibilities. Of course, it is hard *not* to see India in such terms, but just for that reason I would have welcomed more signs of resistance. Stylistically and ideologically, Cameron rather indulges himself, and is rather too insistently personal. But the book is full of striking information about, and impressions of, India; and the personality is not disagreeable or uninteresting.

Cameron is a star of British journalism and television, who has made TV programs about India, and who must expect his readers to be interested in him personally. Moreover, his personality is typical

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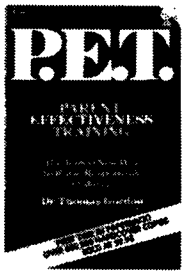

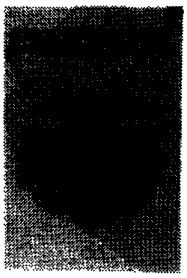

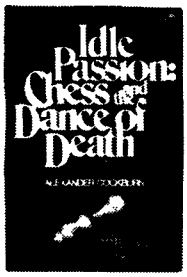

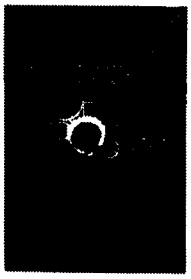

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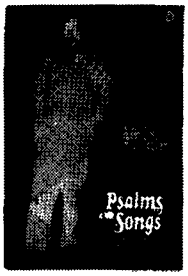

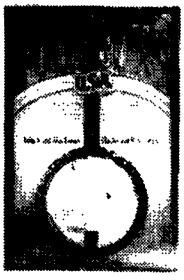

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of the Englishmen who have molded middle-class British opinion over the last generation, and typical in its relation to the history of empire. Stylistically and ideologically, but also in class, education, and looks, Cameron reminds one very much of Malcolm Muggeridge—who is also very much interested in India, and has made TV programs about it. He also looks and sounds like Graham Greene, and like Trevor Howard playing a Graham Greene hero. Haggardly charming, harmlessly despairing, sophisticated, skeptical, rootless, this figure characterizes the world scene for English consciousness today, and it is a post-imperial figure. Cameron talks often of his grandfather, a Scots-Presbyterian minister of formidable learning and perfect Christian conviction. Such a man represents the empire-builders—Nyasaland, now Malawi, was ruled even in this century by a theocracy of such Scots as missionaries—and represents everything Cameron is conscious of not himself being.

NEITHER this book nor Bowle's is a book of ideas—that is, of concepts newly evolved to make sense out of historical problems personally felt. George Woodcock *has* written such a book in *Who Killed the British Empire?*, and it is a very interesting one. He has written such works before—his biographies of Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Orwell, and his accounts of the Doukhobors and of anarchism. Woodcock always leaves the reader with some dissatisfactions or disagreements, but he has long been one of our most stimulating writers.

The major ideas here are those that organize the book. The first part describes the empire in terms of its great routes, listing the imperial ports and fortresses and coaling stations touched in sailing from London around the Cape of Good Hope to India; or via Suez to the same place; or to Canada and the Caribbean; and so on. This works very well, because it brings to light the character of the empire as a system of trade and communications, which was quite different from its character as conquered territory, and in many ways its more essential character.

Another section describes the empire as it was in 1930, a year when it was further extended than ever before or since (swollen by previously German colonies in Africa and Oceania, and by some Arab sheikhdoms) but when its dissolution was foretold by events like Gandhi's Salt March, the surrender of Weihaiwei, and the Statute of Westminster. This idea also works well as a focusing device, a chronological map-center.

Another idea which pulls inchoate material into shape is Woodcock's comparison and contrast of the roles played by Canada and India in the empire. Both entered it in the same decade, but the 19th-century period which saw Canada's gradual emancipation to self-government saw India's gradual subjection to English rule. Then in the 20th century India inherited the dominion idea worked out by Canada. Woodcock, himself a Canadian citizen, has interesting things to say about the development and character of Canadian culture, and about the way the possession of India both made necessary a whole series of other fortresses and dependencies to safeguard the route there, and also made possible the defense of those dependencies by means of the Indian army.

Two other ideas, which seem to me less satisfying, are reflected in the book's title. No one, after all, killed the empire, and to repeat the question as a motif through the book gives an effect of archness—even though Woodcock has a serious answer to give. The other idea is the answer—that if anyone did kill the empire, it was the U.S. It is true that America always expressed disapproval of the British empire, and this may well have exerted influence, especially during England's time of weakness in World War II, on its feelings about keeping India. Moreover, there is a lingering bitterness in English feelings toward America which such a theory would help explain. But Woodcock does not, to my sense, develop this hypothesis beyond a bold formula, and I am inclined to suppose that behind his theorizing lies only an emotional set against America and for the empire.

The appearance of some pro-

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empire sentiment in a man identified with anarchism offers surprising testimony to the power of the empire to move its citizens, even non-Englishmen, in retrospect. Or perhaps it was the non-Englishmen who were always the more imperialistically inclined. Canadians, certainly, have made a special contribution to the imperialist myth in this century, Lord Beaverbrook and his newspapers having been its main proponents in England. But Beaverbrook and his English allies were on the side of the men of power, and were hated by the men of sensibility, who had a power of their own. Woodcock is one of the first authors with roots in the "literary" values of England to turn his attention to this subject.

IMPERIALISM was a militarist and philistine ideology, and there are many cases of its heroes being the villains of the literary world; for instance, Sir Edward Carson, the prosecutor of Oscar Wilde and the hero of the Ulster Volunteer movement of 1912, to keep Ireland in the empire; and F.E. Smith, the prosecutor of Roger Casement and the hero of the refusal to free India in 1930. Among men of power, in the ruling families, only rebels criticized such figures, while among men of letters their only friend and admirer was Kipling, the one literary figure to write about the empire without the heavy protective irony of a Conrad.

The 20th century has seen a different relation to literary values developing gradually among the ruling families; it is in many ways a reflex of their different relation to imperial power in this century. Typical are the Stracheys, a family which had sent half its sons to India from the days of Clive on; Woodcock says that they felt they belonged to India as thoroughly as any Moghul prince. In this century the most famous Stracheys have been Lytton, whose *Eminent Victorians* attacked the myth of the empire-makers (Gordon and Cromer and others), and John, who wrote the textbooks of Marxism for the 30's, and became Minister in the government which freed India. Similar acts of rebellion occurred in all the families like the Stracheys in the 20th century, and lie behind seemingly unconnected cultural gestures. For instance, Claud Cockburn, the Communist journalist, was the son of a Vice-Consul in China; and Maurice Bowra, the mentor in aestheticism to Evelyn Waugh's generation, was the son of an inspector in the Imperial Maritime Customs of China (a service staffed by Europeans, and over half by Englishmen). Such men were anti-imperialist at root, or, better, post-imperialist.

For within the "literary" half of England, one area was always completely averse to empire. The fiction of D.H. Lawrence and his 19th-century precursors, the criticism of F.R. Leavis, which in some sense derives from Lawrence, the fiction of Alan Sillitoe and Philip Callow, and the ideology of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart—all such figures and their work have an implicit Little England world-view about them, which distin-

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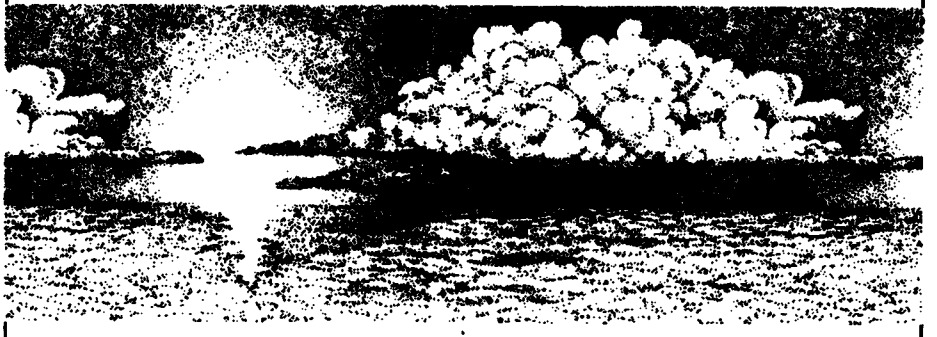

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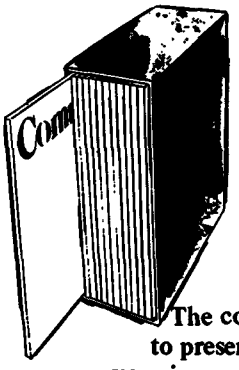

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guishes them from other literary intellectuals with left-wing sympathies. The Fabians, like Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw, were pro-imperialist to the point of backing England against the Boers in 1901, while the writers of Bloomsbury were anti-imperialist to defy their fathers, in the style of a family quarrel and a generational rebellion. This is something very different from the class disapproval and aversion of interest in the writers I have just named. The loyalties of empire, positive and negative, to this day determine the dynamics of English culture much more than at first appears.

American Jewish History

ZION IN AMERICA. By HENRY FEINGOLD. *Twayne. 357 pp. $12.95.*

FRAUD, CORRUPTION, AND HOLINESS. By HAROLD GASTWIRT. *Kennikat Press. 227pp. $12.50.*

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AMERICAN JEWS AND THE ZIONIST IDEA. By NAOMI W. COHEN. *Ktav. 172 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

FOR THE serious historian, as opposed to the mere antiquarian, the history of American Jewry poses weighty problems of interpretation. These problems, as Henry Feingold points out in the preface to his solid introductory survey, *Zion in America,* have to do with finding a proper conceptual framework. Should American Jewish history be seen as a part of the ongoing Jewish historical experience? Or should it be regarded as an aspect of the history of American ethnic groups? Feingold, for his own part, strongly argues the case for American Jewish "exceptionalism": "within the framework of American ethnic history and world Jewish history, American Jewry is a unique group." This uniqueness, in his view, is compounded of two basic factors: on the one hand, Jews were alone in coming to the United States as the bearers of an internalized national culture of the spirit; on the other hand, America was alone in encouraging Jews to become full-fledged citizens. Thus, American Jewish history is the "story of a unique and exceptional people placed in an equally unique and exceptional milieu."

Whatever the merits of Feingold's suggestive thesis, it is clear that the study of the American Jewish past has been handicapped by a failure to see the subject in its broadest contexts. At least until quite recently, much of the work in the field has been characterized by the compiling of honorific, Who's-Who-type lists of prominent and not-so-prominent Jews, and by a failure to gain proper perspective on major themes and issues by placing them against their appropriate backgrounds. A typical "study" of this kind has been devastatingly parodied by Mordecai Richler:

> President John F. Kennedy . . . drove into Dallas on November 22, 1963. Dallas, it is worth noting, was the birthplace of Izzy Lubin, the first Jew to be arrested for jaywalking in Macon County. The city is also the setting for Neiman-Marcus, of department-store fame, and home of the Chevra Kadisha congregation, president Benjy Taub. Indispensable community leaders are Hy Green, Sam Farber, Mort Weiner, the Fiedler family, and Norm Levi.
>
> Tooling into downtown Dallas, which welcomes Jewish shopkeepers, among them Sid's Deli, President Kennedy rode in an open Lincoln Continental. . . .
>
> As the car passed the Texas Public School Book Depository, with lots of titles by Jewish authors in stock, somebody called Oswald shot and killed Kennedy.

Feingold is free of any filiopietistic or self-congratulatory urge of this kind. Before turning to a discussion of Colonial and Revolutionary Jewry (a discussion which is appropriately brief considering the small size of the Jewish pop-

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DAVID SINGER *writes on American Jewish life for* COMMENTARY *and other periodicals.*

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ulation of the time), he sets the stage by tracing in separate chapters the "Old World Jewish Background" and the "Genesis of American Religious Tolerance." Similarly, in examining Jewish economic and political activity in the ante-bellum period, Feingold consistently makes reference to trends and developments in the larger American society. Likewise, his analysis of the "Early Reform Movement in American Judaism" is informed by an awareness of the situation prevailing within both German Reform and American Protestantism. Finally, in describing at some length the East European Jewish immigrant experience, Feingold draws upon recent research on modern Jewish history, on non-Jewish immigrant groups, and on American labor history. *Zion in America* always treats American Jewish history in context.

THE importance of a careful attention to context is underscored by Harold Gastwirt's *Fraud, Corruption, and Holiness,* a fascinating study of "The Controversy over the Supervision of Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City, 1881-1940." To the average reader, the idea of such a study must seem ludicrous, but Gastwirt convincingly demonstrates the importance of his subject for "the development of Jewish communal structure in a pluralistic society." Traditional Judaism, after all, is very much a "pots-and-pans" religion, and knowledge of the state of *kashrut* in any given period tells us a great deal about the overall condition of Jewish life at the time.

American Jews are forever waxing sentimental about the "good old days" on the Lower East Side of New York. A reading of *Fraud, Corruption, and Holiness,* however, shows that in matters relating to *kashrut,* at least, the Jewish immigrant community was a veritable wasteland. In chapter after chapter Gastwirt documents a sordid history of outrageous lawlessness. It is reliably estimated, for example, that in 1915, 40 per cent of New York's kosher butchers fraudulently sold some non-kosher meat, while 20 per cent fraudulently dispensed non-kosher meat exclusive-

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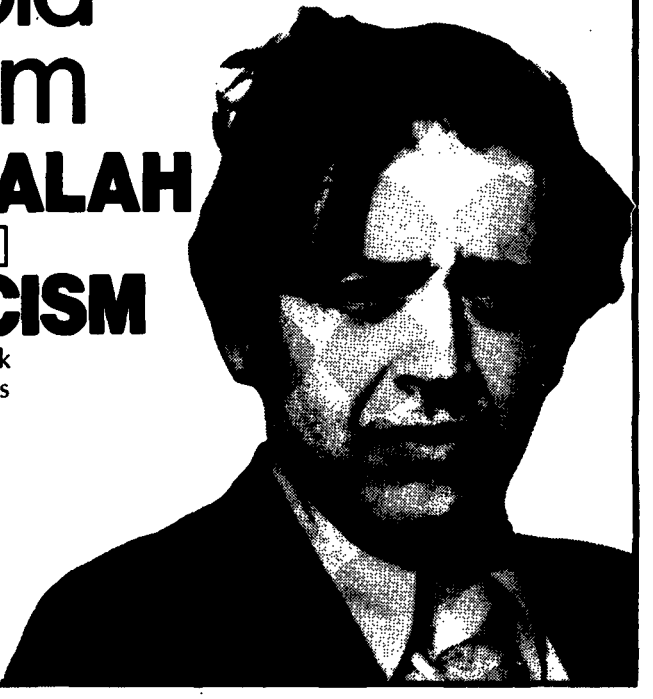

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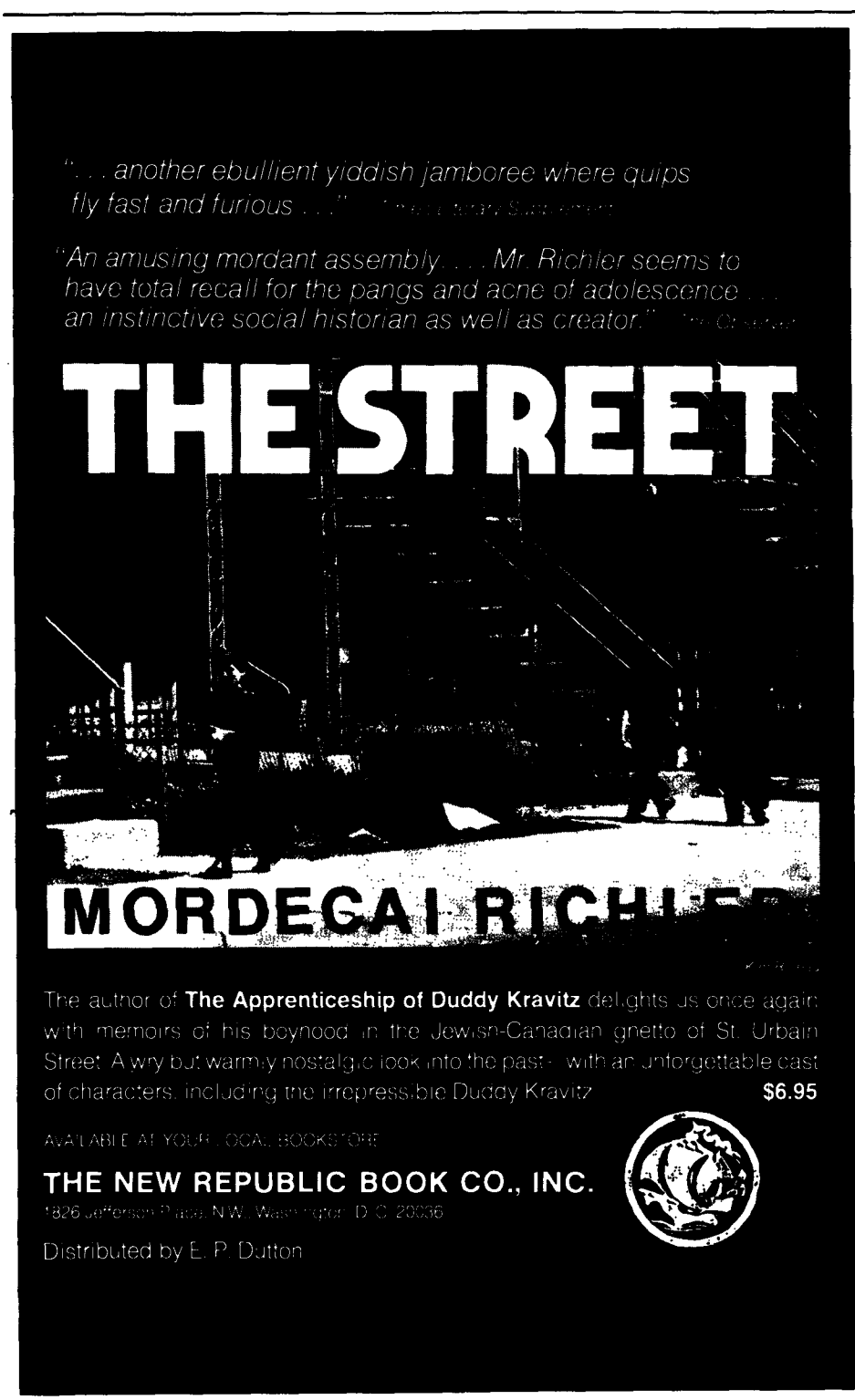
ly. In 1922, it was reported that "95 per cent of the delicatessen sold as kosher was really [non-kosher]." The kosher poultry industry in the late 1920's was characterized by "threats of physical violence, assaulted butchers, destroyed [delivery] vehicles . . . and bombed poultry shops." The "most notorious case of fraud" of all occurred in the late 1930's and involved kosher-for-Passover products: a certain Hyman Rabinowitz, passing himself off as a rabbi authorized to certify the *kashrut* of such products, "solicited his clients by mail and usually required them only to purchase a few new cooking utensils before giving his *hekhsher* (certification). He had never checked into the ingredients of the products nor had he appointed any *mashgiah* (supervisor)."

How did this sorry state of affairs come about? Gastwirt maintains that it was largely attributable to the absence of communal control of *kashrut*, which had been the rule in Europe. Because of the separation of church and state in America, because pluralism and voluntarism were the order of the day, any possibility of coercive communal pressure was precluded. Efforts to centralize *kashrut* supervision in New York City, therefore, invariably fell prey to personal rivalries, internal group clashes, and sheer economic greed. Small wonder, then, that the element of the Jewish community most concerned over *kashrut* abuses increasingly turned to government intervention as the only way out of an intolerable situation.

Despite the impressive array of evidence marshaled by Gastwirt to demonstrate the pitfalls of voluntarism and pluralism, his analysis is incomplete. ***Fraud, Corruption, and Holiness*** tells us next to nothing about the larger religious life of the Jewish immigrant community. Gastwirt takes it for granted that the bulk of the Jews on the Lower East Side were "driven by a steadfast loyalty to the Torah and Jewish tradition," that they were committed Orthodox Jews who desired to see *kashrut* rules strictly enforced. But Charles Liebman has persuasively argued that most Lower East Side Jews had only the most tenuous ties to religious Orthodoxy. Might this not mean that the scandalous *kashrut* situation was only a symptom of a more general collapse of religious standards? In the post-World War II period, when large numbers of committed Orthodox Jews actually did come to the United States, there was a radical improvement in *kashrut* supervision. And today, with Orthodoxy making rapid strides on the American Jewish scene, *kashrut* standards are stricter than ever before, despite the continuing impact of pluralism and voluntarism. Because Gastwirt fails to relate *kashrut* to a larger pattern of religious observance, he falls short of providing a definitive analysis of his subject.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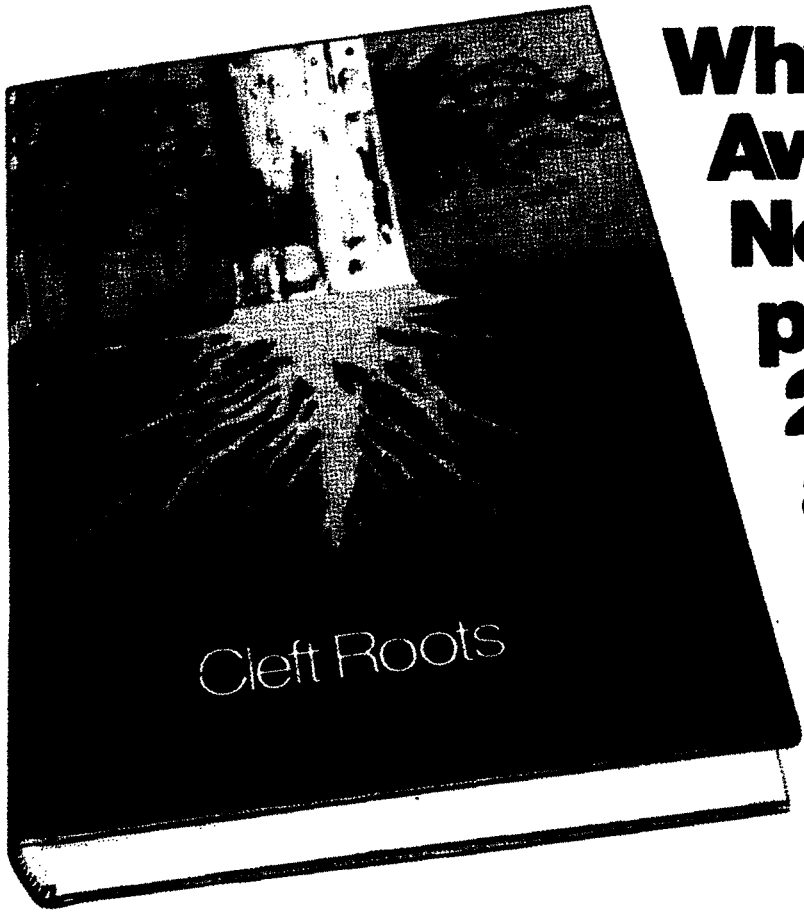

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Newsworthy

LIKE Gastwirt, Melvin Urofsky focuses on a specific aspect of the American Jewish experience in *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*. His study is a first-rate piece of work, and it is so precisely because he never loses sight of the broad context framing his subject. Indeed, it is Urofsky's contention that American Zionism can only be understood *in situ*:

> It is the argument of this book that Zionism in America has not been limited to a narrow Jewish experience, but has been part of and reflective of larger trends in the overall society; that in the United States, the movement has not only been Zionist, but American as well; and that it has enjoyed the greatest successes precisely when its goals and methods have coincided with the dominant trends in the broader society.

The nature of American Zionism, Urofsky argues, has been determined by the double desire of American Jews to help in the rebuilding of Palestine as a Jewish refuge, and to live and be accepted as American citizens. Harmonizing these two desires has by no means always been a simple matter; prior to 1914, in fact, the vast majority of American Jews shunned the Jewish national movement. To the established German Jewish community, Zionism raised the specter of the charge of dual loyalty. To the newly arrived East European Jewish community, Zionism seemed a "luxury" that could ill be afforded amid the hardships of ghetto life.

World War I changed all this, by making evident to American Jews the imperative need of a refuge for the hapless and helpless European Jewish masses. The war also brought to the fore a new group of Zionist leaders—men like Louis Brandeis, Stephen S. Wise, and Julian Mack—who, deeply imbued with the spirit of American Progressivism, propounded the view that Zionism was a "natural extension of Jewish and American ideals." The bulk of Urofsky's study is given over to an analysis of the work of Louis Brandeis and his associates—their attempts to "legitimize Zionism by Americanizing it," the conflicts between them and the more nationalistic wing of the Zionist movement, and their efforts to assist European Jewry in the years between the two world wars. By 1940, Urofsky concludes, the American Zionist movement "spoke and acted in terms that could be effective in the context of [America's] social and political requirements."

The key figure in the Americanization of the Zionist movement was of course, Louis Brandeis, and he is very much Urofsky's hero. A number of theories have been put forward to account for Brandeis's turn to Zionism—his political ambition, his sense of blood kinship, and his economic philosophy have been among the factors adduced. Urofsky believes the root factors were Brandeis's Americanism and his commitment to Progressive reform ideals. For Brandeis, as well as for Stephen S. Wise, Julian Mack, Henrietta Szold, and Felix Frankfurter, Zionism was, as Brandeis himself put it, "the Pilgrim inspiration and impulse [all] over again." "The highest [Zionist] ideals," Brandeis declared, "are essentially American in a very important particular. It is Democracy that Zionism represents. It is Social Justice which Zionism represents, and every bit of that is the American ideals of the 20th century." Urofsky writes:

> A careful examination of Brandeis's writings and his activities as head of the [Zionist] movement clearly reveals that his approach to the Jewish problem remarkably resembled his approach to the problems confronting industrial America. . . .
>
> . . . Brandeis saw Palestine as a small country free from the "curse of bigness," one that could experiment in enlarging the bounds of freedom and social justice, much as a state within the United States could serve as a laboratory for legislative experimentation. He assumed from the start that the Jewish homeland would be a democracy, with men and women equal partners in building up a free society. . . .

THE reader interested in the development of American Zionism but unprepared to wade through

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Urofsky's hefty volume will probably find Naomi W. Cohen's *American Jews and the Zionist Idea* an attractive alternative. Dr. Cohen presents in brief compass an overview of American Zionist history from its beginnings to 1967. Her perspective on, and analysis of, American Zionism is strikingly similar to Urofsky's; like him she focuses on Zionism "as an integral part of the American matrix," and emphasizes "what Zionism has meant to American Jews, how it [has] interacted with government policy and American social moods, and, above all, how Zionism [has been] Americanized." In arguing that "American Jewish interest in a Jewish homeland has been the product of the American environment no less than of the Jewish heritage," Dr. Cohen notes:

> On one level [American Zionism] was a byproduct of . . . the needs of European Jewry. In large measure it was determined by the degree of Jewish affluence and security. It also reflected the views of government and society on Zionism and on ethnic loyalties generally. . . . On another level, Zionism was more than a fixed quantity to be responded to, independent of the American Jewish experience. . . . Just as Zionism needed the support of American Jewry, so did the latter need Zionism in charting a viable course between the antagonistic poles of assimilation within the majority and survival of the minority group. . . . A product of acculturation, American Zionism from 1917 to 1967 reflected the maturation of the Jewish community in the United States.

American Jews and the Zionist Idea is based largely on secondary sources, and thus does not break new ground. It is, however, always intelligent and informative.

DIFFERENT in subject matter, these four books reflect a shared commitment to a serious understanding of the American Jewish past. What sets them apart from the majority of writings on American Jewish history is the striving of their authors to keep a steady eye on those general American and Jewish currents which are pertinent to their themes. *Fraud, Corruption, and Holiness* is somewhat flawed in this respect, but remains a valuable monograph. Also of value is *American Jews and the Zionist Idea,* while *Zion in America* is easily the best introductory text to American Jewish history available today. As for *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust,* it is nearly in the same class as Arthur Goren's *New York Jews and the Quest for Community* (1970) and Moses Rischin's *The Promised City* (1962), the two best studies in the whole field of American Jewish historical writing. If these volumes are an indication of the general level of work currently being done, there is reason here to celebrate the beginning of a new era in the study of the American Jewish past.

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Speaking in Tongues

AFTER BABEL: ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION. By GEORGE STEINER. *Oxford University Press. 507 pp. $17.50.*

Reviewed by DAVID STERN

THROUGH seven books and countless essays (most notably in the *New Yorker*), George Steiner has attempted to follow the vocation of the man of letters, to apply a literary sensibility to every aspect of culture. To this task he has brought some formidable equipment: trilingual from childhood, he possesses an impressive erudition in the major literatures of Western culture and a writing style at once elegant, ornate, and, above all, copious, which has served him as a glittering vehicle for the display of that erudition. In pursuing the vocation of general cultural critic, Steiner has exercised his erudition and style upon a range of issues far broader than those usually approached in conventional literary criticism. Thus, in *Language and Silence*, he concerned himself with the relation between literature and the various forms of totalitarianism; in *In Bluebeard's Castle*, he proposed a "meaning" for the Holocaust and reflected on the future of civilization in its aftermath; now, in *After Babel*, he has attempted to confront the significance of the newly evolving sciences of language for the theory of translation and the study of literature. More than all his earlier writings, however, this most recent and ambitious book raises the question of whether all Steiner's erudition and elegance have actually served to integrate the complexities of culture or, rather, to confuse them through violent simplification.

As its title suggests, Steiner's major concern in this book is with the diversity of language. There are, it seems, no fewer than five thousand mutually incomprehensible languages spoken throughout the world, virtually all of which are equally rich, though in different ways. Steiner argues that there are no physical, geographical, or evolutionary reasons sufficient to explain this diversity of languages; indeed, their existence not only contradicts the almost universal uniformity of human biological and mental structures, but has proven historically destructive: many communities in the past have withered and perished as a result of their linguistic isolation. For Steiner, this "destructive prodigality" embodies the essential paradox of language, the clue to its enigmatic existence, for which, he writes at one point, "the proper start is wonder, a tensed delight at the bare fact."

STEINER's initial complaint against the recent sciences of language stems from what he considers their refusal even to face seriously the issue of linguistic diversity, let alone to exhibit the proper wonder and tensed delight before it. He is partly right. The closest modern linguistics has come to providing an explanation for Babel has been in the famous hypothesis of Benjamin Lee Whorf, who believed that every language literally inhabits a different landscape of consciousness and carries within itself a unique "world-view" which, in turn, shapes its speaker's view of reality. For Whorf, each language is a monad, and like the cultural consciousness which its surface grammar reflects, is ultimately untranslatable. Whorf's theory, however, is ridden by its own problems of circularity of argument—which came first, consciousness or language?—and has been largely rejected by most contemporary linguists.

Current students of language have also not been overly concerned with the matter of diversity, but have devoted their studies instead to those features common to all languages, and to the question of linguistic competence: how is it possible that, despite the complexity of language, any normal child of three is fully able to speak sentences which are at once grammatical and fully original? The best-known answer, and the one to which most linguists today subscribe in one fashion or another—

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the name most frequently associated with it is that of Noam Chomsky—has proposed that the human mind possesses a specific linguistic capacity which is probably innate; by means of transformational operations, this capacity, an internalized knowledge of grammar, generates sentences of suitable and grammatical form from linguistic "deep-structures." At a highly abstract level certain of these structures, in turn, provide for a universal grammar common to all languages. Against the particularism of Whorfian linguistics, which tends to see each language as a kind of poem, uniquely binding form and meaning, these most recent projects of transformational grammar—which tend to be both technical and arcane, given to logical formalizations and mathematical models—represent an extreme linguistic universalism.

The greater part of *After Babel* is devoted to a match between Whorf's and Chomsky's views on language, with Steiner acting as umpire and commentator. As it turns out, however, the game is never really won by either side since, after pages of qualifications and questions, Steiner generally concludes: we do not yet know. The fact is that many of the most basic hypotheses proposed by transformational grammar are as yet unproved; like those in any science—and because of the rapidity of linguistic advances, perhaps even more so here—all linguistic theories are tentative, a circumstance which virtually all linguists would be the first to admit, but which Steiner often seems ready to take as cause for rejecting the entire enterprise. Steiner himself is more sympathetic to Whorf's metalinguistics than to transformational grammar, which he accuses of being not only inadequate to the actual experience of language—and particularly to its anomaly, ambiguity, and innate "looseness"—but ultimately unfeasible as well. "The application of the concept of exact science to the study of language," he writes, "is an idealized simile," by which he presumably means that a poem can never be reduced to an equation. In addition, Steiner also argues that transformational gram-

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mar itself is a kind of linguistic gnosis: the project of constructing a universal grammar is merely the modern version of the age-old, mystical search for the original Adamic tongue which was snatched from the lips of mankind at the moment of Babel. The analogy is suggestive, but overlooking as it does the obvious differences between the mystical search and the linguistic project both in method and aims, it turns out to be so superficial as to be meaningless.

A quasi-mystical, gnostic tradition of speculation in language is the origin for the theory of language, or the sketch for such a theory, that Steiner himself proposes. As his own masters, he invokes Kafka, Borges, and Walter Benjamin, whom he also describes as three modern kabbalists. For his model, he takes poetry, and especially elusive and cryptic poetry like that of Hölderlin or Celan. Language in his view is essentially private, even hermetic—a fully translucent statement, which would not require an act of interpretation, does not exist. Language—or more accurately, languages—originated not out of man's desire to communicate his deepest longings or most immediate needs, but out of a "shared secrecy," wherein small clans first invented the password in order to exclude strangers from their midst. The essential secrecy of all language, the degree to which it conceals meaning rather than communicating it, is connected as well with its use as the instrument through which man refuses "to accept the world as it is." This aspect of language tends toward counter-factuality, fantasy, and the lie—all of which Steiner understands as attempts on the part of man to defeat and negate mortality. As the epitome of "alternity," the will toward otherness, this darker side of language also supplies its power of creativity, and yields the imaginary, the fictive, and the poetic.

Unlike Whorf, however, Steiner sees translation—here the book's disguised subject emerges as its real focus—as an attempt to abolish the multiplicity of language, to reinvent the shape of an original, lost meaning. Through his efforts, the translator " 're-experiences' the evolution of language itself, the ambivalence of the relations between language and world, between 'languages' and 'worlds.'" According to Steiner, all texts require translation, if not interlingually (between languages), then intralingually (within a language). *After Babel* begins with a number of close readings of literary texts from Shakespeare to Noel Coward, through which Steiner attempts to prove that every act of reading is also an act of translation, and concludes with a chapter which considers acts of cultural transmission as exercises in translation. Between these two universal modes of translation, there is translation proper, in which Steiner distinguishes four movements, almost a kind of narrative. To illustrate this narrative he moves effortlessly to and fro among German, French, and English texts, achieving something close to a literal *tour de force*. Translation, he proves, is ultimately a wholly altruistic task: self-effacing, but also self-extinguishing. Steiner recalls how Stephen McKenna, the translator of Plotinus, spoke of Plotinus' "literally submerging his own being."

THIS section of *After Babel* is surely the most exciting and original, yet its very strengths expose the weaknesses of the rest of the book. For one thing, there is a huge marshaling of facts, often to no evident purpose, which makes Steiner seem more interested in building a second tower of Babel than in elucidating the problems suggested by the first one. In erecting this edifice, Steiner tends on occasion to lose his grip on his own language, and to make statements like, "The silences, the insanities, the suicides of a number of great writers are rigorous affirmations of an experience of the boundaries of language" (which can only leave one wondering if they do not more rigorously affirm the boundaries of life). In too many passages like this one, Steiner's own voice becomes ornate, confused, and above all public—a style curiously at odds with his proposed view of language, or with the bareness, privacy, and paradox of his "kabbalistic" masters. And what actual meaning is

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there even in calling Kafka, Borges, and Benjamin "modern kabbalists" when, with the possible exception of Benjamin, their writings show only the smallest familiarity with Kabbalah? By employing language so recklessly, Steiner violates the very rules he canonizes.

The excesses of his rhetoric and erudition should not, and cannot, hide the more fundamental defects in Steiner's argument, and primarily those in his critique of transformational grammar. When, for example, Steiner condemns current linguists for not facing the issue of Babel, his criticism is clearly directed not so much against their failure to include the real differences among languages in their models—a valid criticism which has been made by other linguists, including Chomsky—as against their failure to provide an explanation for Babel itself. But how could they? Steiner's question, which in its hopeless mixture of innocence and absurdity is like asking why the world was created as it is, will never be satisfactorily answered since, as Steiner himself remarks in passing, "The problem of Babel is quite simply that of human individuation." At other moments, Steiner appears to believe that the simplest method of refuting Noam Chomsky is to shift the level of discourse from the realm of linguistics or philosophy to that of glorified poetics—to change the subject, in other words. But the force of Chomsky's claims is not so easily dismissed. For what is most annoying about Steiner's treatment of linguistics is less his oversimplifications of its complexities than his sheer disregard of them. These are, after all, difficult issues, and there is an element of intellectual arrogance, even dishonesty, in the self-assurance with which Steiner, in the space of a few pages, glides from one issue to the next—through areas over which some of the most prominent linguists and philosophers in this century have hesitated their entire lives.

IT IS curious and significant that Steiner omits from consideration a number of linguistic theories other than those of Chomsky or Whorf. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structural linguistics and probably the most important linguist of the century, is scarcely cited, which in a history of linguistics is comparable to omitting Einstein from a history of modern physics. Although Steiner does discuss Roman Jakobson's theory of translation, he almost never mentions his linguistic work, nor does he discuss the contemporary French structuralists, yet their theories of language closely resemble Steiner's own—he may well have borrowed some of his ideas from them—and in addition Jakobson and his French colleagues have succeeded, at least partly, in applying linguistic criteria to the study of poetry and to those very features of language which Steiner claims resist linguistic description.

GIVEN his propensity for overlooking or improperly evaluating actual attempts to grapple with the problems of language, it is not surprising that Steiner should also overlook the weaknesses in his own approach—his failure, for example, to clarify whether the problematic aspects of language merely represent a series of as yet unsolved puzzles or whether they constitute a true mystery, beyond solution; or his failure to answer the question of why individuals should still express, or conceal, their most inviolable privacies in remarkably similar ways. These unresolved questions, which point toward the true paradox of language, escape Steiner's notice. His vast display of erudition and knowledge serves in the end only to mysticize and mystify language, not to elucidate it. Steiner's preference of gnosis to intelligence, erudition to explication, inevitably has the effect of vitiating the cause for which he wages his war against linguistics: the continued viability of poetic language. For if poetry is indeed the inscrutable hermeticism which Steiner claims it is, why bother to read or write it? Rather than defending poetry, this book offers an amazingly persuasive argument against it.

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Watergate & the Presidency

BREACH OF FAITH: THE FALL OF RICHARD NIXON. By THEODORE H. WHITE. *Atheneum-Readers' Digest Press. 373 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by JEANE KIRKPATRICK

With his account of the decline and fall of Richard Nixon, Theodore White, that indefatigable chronicler of national political life, has not only succeeded once more in transforming presidential politics into best-selling nonfiction, but has also demonstrated that the loss of power can be made as fascinating and satisfying a story as its acquisition.

On the face of it, Watergate as a subject would seem to have posed special problems, even to someone of such acknowledged skills as a raconteur as White. It seems safe to say that no political events in human history have been discussed in such detail, at such length, and with such repetitiveness as the burglary of the Democratic headquarters, the cover-up, the hearings, and the tapes. Is there an American so insulated, so ill-informed, as not to recognize the names of E. Howard Hunt and Gordon Liddy, the faces of John Dean and Sam Ervin, the new terms that have seeped into the nation's political culture, further polluting it with cynicism—"expletive deleted," "deep throat," "the limited hangout"? Who does not know the dismal scenario which led Liddy to CREEP and the DNC, Hunt to Miami, Dean to Kalmbach, Mitchell and Magruder to perjury, Nixon to San Clemente, and Gerald Ford to the White House? Yet this is just the tale White recounts in *Breach of Faith*.

His account adds little to the already voluminous public record on Watergate. Although some participants are quoted as saying things they had not previously said for attribution, there are no surprises in *Breach of Faith*—only an effort to relate Nixon's early life to his later achievements and excesses, a plausible if not entirely persuasive explanation of why Nixon and his lieutenants engaged in the bizarre and illegal behavior which ultimately brought their downfall, and a painstaking account of how and when Richard Nixon and his lieutenants slipped across the line of legality without deciding to do it, or even noticing it had occurred. And yet despite the familiarity of the events being narrated, and despite the absence of surprises, one reads this book with rapt attention, and even in a state of suspense.

White sketches with broad, sure strokes the varying contexts—personal, social, and historical—which shaped Richard Nixon's approach to politics: the gentle Quaker mother and failed father, the penurious childhood and pinched youth, the hostile establishment, California's distinctive political culture, the progressive centralization of power in the Presidency, the spread of higher education, the rise of ideological politics and of a culture-class struggle, the intensification of domestic strife and foreign pressure, the growing power of adversary journalism. For White, context is not merely background, it stimulates and shapes responses. Nixon's lawbreaking is seen in the context of a decade of "assaultive politics" (Alexander Bickel's phrase). His lawbreaking, neither justified nor excused, is presented as part of a process in which violence, leaks, and Daniel Ellsberg are related to the Huston plan, wiretapping, and, finally, to Watergate. And all of *this* is seen by White to occur within a context of three decades of expanding presidential power and of casual, nearly universal, campaign violations.

White's passion for inclusiveness is closely related to two other qualities in his writing: a complex point of view and an insistence on describing characters empathetically, from within. Both these attributes are a source of irritation to his critics. Those who believe that to understand everything is to forgive everything would reproach White for subtly exonerating that which deserves only condemnation. In fact, White's reporting is not value-

JEANE KIRKPATRICK, *who teaches political science at Georgetown University, is the author of* Political Woman.

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free, but his inclusiveness does leave room for a good deal of tacking and trimming from one book to the next. Take, for example, his treatment of Nixon and the press. In a chapter of *The Making of the President: 1972* entitled "Power Struggle: President versus Press," White commented at length on the "institutional hatred" that had developed between Nixon and the "Eastern liberal press," described the special notions of honor and style of the "baronial press," and, in a paragraph notable for its rejection of the myth of the neutral media, wrote:

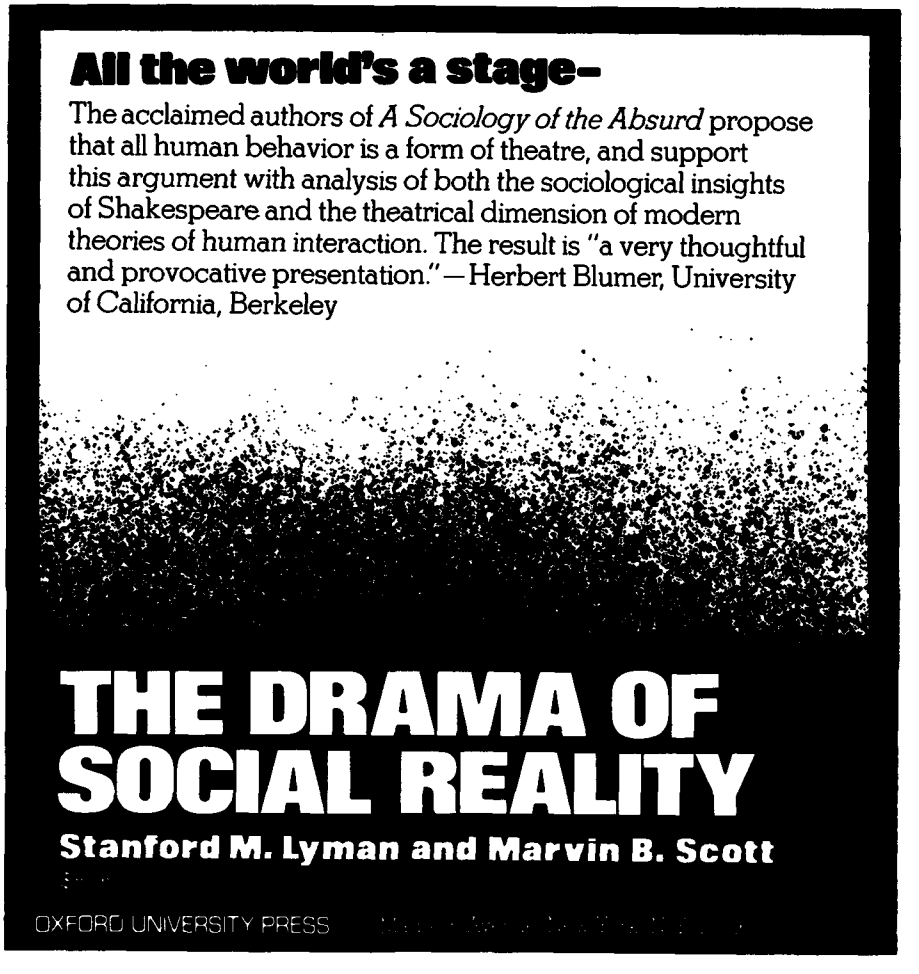
> It is [Benjamin] Bradlee and the Washington *Post* that concern us most here—for the Washington *Post* hates Richard Nixon and Nixon hates the Washington *Post*, and they are locked like two scorpions in a bottle determined to destroy each other. It was the *Post*, more out of zest for the hunt than out of any political malice, that made the Nixon administration its target. With gusto, total dedication, and courage, its reporters made the Nixon administration their prey —and as they cried "Tally-Ho," the rest of the press pack followed.

Two years later, in *Breach of Faith*, Bradlee and the Washington *Post* still figure large, but there is no more talk of scorpions and mutual animosities, no adversary press vying with the President for control of the national agenda, no mention, as in the 1972 volume, that "Nixon has appeared in liberal prose always as if the brand of Cain were on him." After Watergate, White concludes, in a passage heavy with apparently unintended irony, "whatever their extravagance, the men and women of the news system could take their absolution from Barry Goldwater's campaign keynote of 1964—'Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! . . . Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!' "

In White's accounts, opposites are not so much harmonized as assimilated into the ongoing panorama at whose center is that "supreme office," the Presidency. It is here, in dealing with this office, that the tendency to hyperbole, which is charactertstic of all White's books, becomes a problem of some importance. That White romanticizes the office of the President, delights in its power, enhances its majesty, and exaggerates its importance has long been clear. In this he resembles a generation of liberals who advocated and welcomed the expansion of the power of the federal government and its concentration in the hands of the President. But in *Breach of Faith*, White's enthusiasm for the Presidency leads him to assign to that office mystical powers it almost surely does not possess and attribute to the Founding Fathers views to which they did not subscribe. In an unfortunate final chapter White asserts: "Of all the political myths out of which the Republic was born . . . none was more hopeful than the crowning myth of the Presidency—that the people, in their shared wisdom, would be able to choose the best man to lead them." And there is a "derivative myth"—"that the Presidency, the supreme office, would make noble any man who held its responsibility."

Yet so foreign to the Founding Fathers was White's "crowning myth" that instead of vesting the election of the President in the people they proposed an electoral college, whose composition, "transient existence," and "detached situation" were carefully planned institutional safeguards against human frailties and iniquities presumed to be ubiquitous. It is true that Hamilton anticipated "a constant probability of seeing the [Presidency] filled by characters preeminent for ability and virtue" (*Federalist* 68), but this expectation is remote from a faith that the office would render noble any incumbent.

Richard Nixon did not betray a mystical Presidency; his "true crime" was not that "he destroyed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the myth that binds America together" and it was not for this that he was "driven from office." To pretend so is to obfuscate Nixon's actual offenses. Nixon condoned and committed crimes, that is, breaches of the law which, once known, were intolerable. White himself says as much elsewhere. The system does not require that all Presidents be noble, only that they uphold the law, or, at minimum, that they not be exposed as having broken the law. More than the tendency to hyperbole may be involved in White's reluctance to settle for holding Nixon to account only for that of which he has been proved guilty—though this seemed quite enough for such staunch friends and defenders of Nixon as Senators Tower and Goldwater. It may be that to White, however, breaking the law does not seem adequate grounds for driving a President from office.

The opposites which White tries hardest to accommodate in *Breach of Faith* are his conviction that Nixon's lawlessness had to be punished ("If such practices had occurred before, they had occurred secretly. Now they were public. If they were to be accepted publicly and not repudiated then all future Presidents would be free to break the same laws Nixon had broken") and his equally strong conviction that ordinary standards are neither appropriate nor binding for Presidents. After all, not only have other Presidents and presidential candidates broken laws, but politics itself involves "passion, manipulation, prejudice, greed, interests," and a President "must inescapably be something of a hypocrite, promising all to all, knowing that, if elected, he must inevitably sacrifice the interests of some for others." Even more vividly than the events themselves, *Breach of Faith* suggests that Richard Nixon and the men who served him were victims of the myth of the supreme Presidency and the supreme President. If the events of Watergate have dealt this myth a mortal blow, as White feels they may have, then Richard Nixon's excesses apprehended may prove of benefit to the nation.

And yet—like White, I am overcome by the impulse to equivocate. It is a fact that expansion of executive functions is a hallmark of 20th-century politics and that today powerful executives dominate the governments of all modern nations, democratic and non-democratic. Perhaps a contemporary nation which desires to be autonomous cannot *do* without a leader in whose hands are gathered great but not necessarily irresponsible power. Should this be the case, then the effort to reduce executive power is an exercise in futility or self-destruction, and White may be right in saying that if Nixon has "destroyed the power of a President to lead," "that will end in disaster worse than sin or crime."

These words dramatize White's conviction that a nation requires a powerful President, and his rejection of a moralistic conception of politics. What is worse than sin or crime? For him, destruction of the nation, the end of America, the end of the democratic project. Now, the idea, common enough in other times and places, that the survival of the nation and its government supersedes issues of ordinary morality implies that a President's moral character is to be measured according to a special yardstick and balanced against his ability to lead. White tacitly addresses this issue when he suggests that the same character trait—toughness—which was responsible for Nixon's greatest successes in international politics was also the source of his impulse to illegal behavior:

> For six weeks prior to the break-in Nixon had been accepting such invitations to toughness and performing as the tough guy, gunslinger, riverboat gambler of global politics. On May 8, 1972, he had faced an enemy offensive in Hanoi and had toughed that one out with a brilliant decision—mine Haiphong, if necessary challenge both China and Russia at once in the gamble of war and peace. He had won the gamble. He had gone on, two weeks later, to Moscow—and toughed it out with Brezhnev and Kosygin. . . . And thus now, after such immense and successful gambles on the world scene, there came to him this apparently trivial thing—this break-in at the Democratic headquarters.

"His streak of *machismo* surfacing," Nixon is over the line in five minutes. "Play it tough," he tells Haldeman, "that's the way they play it and that's the way we are going to play it."

CAN a bad man make a good President? Does the moral quality of a leader derive from his private life, or from his public deeds? Must a President be, as White suggests, something of a cynic, hypocrite, and demagogue? Do the moral failures of leaders necessarily harm the nations they lead? Which did greater harm, the unconstitutional excesses of Nixon, Ehrlichman, Krogh, and company, or the revelation of those excesses, followed by the resignation of Nixon and the emasculation of the Presidency? And how do we decide? Is the exposure and extirpation of wrongdoing a good in itself, or does everything depend on consequences? Were the invasion and collapse of Cambodia and South Vietnam a consequence of the collapse of the Nixon administration? And if so, was that too high a price to pay for the restoration of respect for law in the highest places? Or is no price too high? All these questions are relevant to a judicious assessment of the decline and fall of Richard Nixon. It is to White's credit, and the ultimate source of the book's fascination, that, although he does not address them directly, his account points us back from the topical to such questions as these—the perennial questions of politics.

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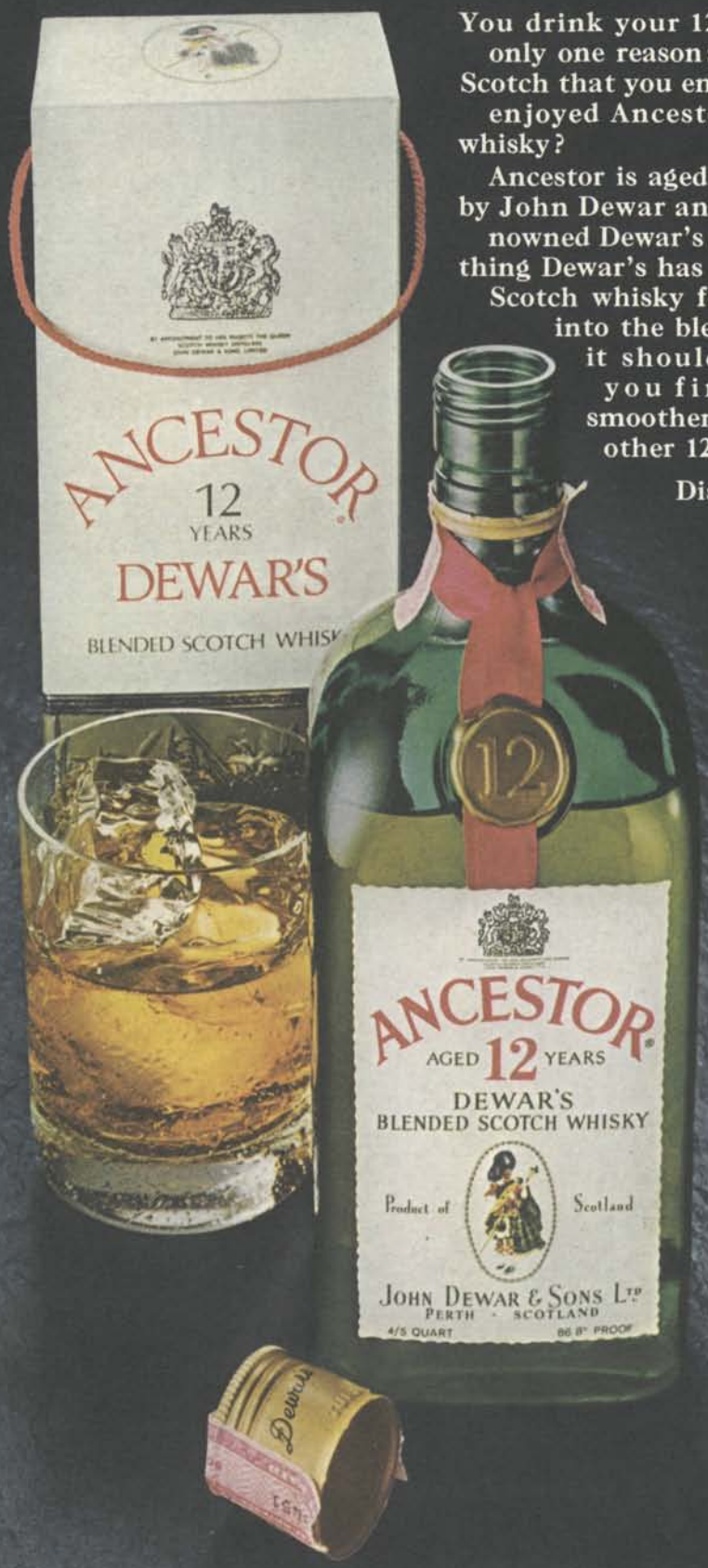

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